

Chapter 2

On the Study of War

Analytical studies of war can be traced back at least to the great work of the historian Thucydides, but systematic exploration of war as a unique but generic form of behavior between political communities was undertaken initially by political philosophers. Machiavelli, Rousseau, Kant, Hobbes, Hegel, and others had significant things to say about the etiology and consequences of war, but their insights were suggestive and prescriptive rather than empirical.¹ They could enumerate the reasons wars are likely, but their causal statements were mostly hypothetical. Few had systematic evidence to support them.

The search for patterns and generalizations based on accumulated evidence is of more recent vintage. Today there is a large literature that has a common focus on the “causes of war.”

Descriptive studies of the incidence, location, and costs of war have advanced significantly over the past few decades. Today, comprehensive lists of wars, rebellions, civil wars, and other categories of violence are available (Wright 1942; Perré 1962; Bouthoul/Carrère 1976; Small et al. 1982; Levy 1981; Luard 1986). Although there are methodological debates about contenders for inclusion and exclusion (Duvall/Raymond 1976; Luard 1986), researchers can take satisfaction in the knowledge that only minor tinkering or marginal additions would be necessary to satisfy the requirements of comprehensiveness in time and location. While most data admittedly come from Western sources, dealing with armed contests between the nation states of the modern era, there are no compelling reasons to postpone research until, let us say, we have a full catalogue of data on intertribal wars in Africa during the thirteenth century. Today we know what we are talking about—the phenomenon to be explained—which was not the case until fairly recently.

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In the realm of explanation, however, the record is more sketchy. The causes of war, which are *the* subject of speculation in international relations over the last four centuries, remain obscure, but less obscure than previously. Modern research has still left a trail of uncertainty, partial clues, contradiction, and continued mystery. This is not unexpected, since the scientific enterprise never moves along a straight path. All avenues and possibilities have to be explored, and we would expect many of them to lead to intellectual dead ends or to findings of only weak significance. That there is no answer to the ancient question “why war?” is not the fault of the scientific method *per se*. But how questions are posed, which questions are raised, which are neglected, what assumptions are made about causation, and how we select levels of analysis and individual explanatory variables vitally affect the quality of results. Inconsistent results are another problem. For example, studies assert that arms races lead to war or that they do not lead to war. Some argue that balances of power are critical foundations for peace. Others argue, marshaling equally impressive evidence, that preponderances are a necessary condition for peace. Alliances have been linked both to war and to peace. This state of affairs prompted David Singer (1979: 14) to write that the systematic study of war has failed to “achieve any significant theoretical breakthrough.” There is, he suggested, no “compelling explanation” for war. His solution to the problem was to shift from the concept of causality to that of explanation: the latter implies a plurality of possible explanations rather than the identification of a single cause. This, of course, is an important insight. Yet, Singer did not raise other concerns about the nature of causality or explanation in contemporary war and peace research. He did not, for example, examine the dominant sociological mode of analysis that emphasizes the explanatory potential of broad systemic factors and national attributes, what I will call ecological variables. The assumption is that somehow these background conditions are translated into disputes and wars through actions and interactions. If there is causality, then it lies through a complex chain of conditions and events, but the ecological variables, which are often operationalized in dichotomous terms, stand out as the sources of explanation in most studies.

2.1 Explanatory Configurations

Investigators of conflict, crises, and war reached a consensus years ago that monocausal explanations are theoretically and empirically deficient. Kenneth Waltz’ (1957) classic typology of war explanations convincingly demonstrated various problems arising from diagnoses that locate war causation exclusively at the individual, state attribute, or systemic levels. He also illustrated how prescriptions based on faulty diagnoses offer no solution to the problem. Even Rousseau’s powerful exploration of the consequences of anarchy, updated by Waltz (1979), remains full of insights, but it only specifies why wars recur (there is nothing to prevent them) and offers few clues that help to predict when, where, and over what issues. Blainey (1973), in another telling attack on monocausal theories, continues where Waltz left off. He offers, on the

basis of rich historical illustrations, both logical and anecdotal rebuttals of facile explanations of war that dot academic and philosophical thought on the subject. But rebuttals of the obvious are not sufficient. We presently have myriads of theories of war, emphasizing all sorts of factors that can help explain its etiology. As Carroll/Fink (1975) note, there are if anything too many theories, and even too many typologies of theories. Quoting Timasheff approvingly, they point out that anything *might* lead to war, but nothing will *certainly* lead to war.

Table 2.1 sets out the location of explanatory variables in some of the theoretical and empirical literature. More elaborate classification schemes are available (e.g., Deutsch et al. 1971; Carroll/Fink 1975), but our purpose is not to add yet another typology or to produce so many cells that virtually every study has a niche of its own. The studies are categorized according to the well-known “levels of analysis” scheme, but include only those that emphasize ecological/attribute variables; according to a static-dynamic dichotomy (or more properly, a dimension); and according to an attribute or relational configuration of the independent variables.

Table 2.1 Ecological, attribute, and relational correlates of war: selected studies

	Attributes		Relations	
	Static	Dynamic	Static	Dynamic
System-level	<i>Power concentration and war</i>		<i>Status inconsistency and war</i>	<i>Power transition and war</i>
	+ Singer et al. (1972)		+ Wallace (1973)	+ Organski (1968)
	– Levy/Morgan (1986)		– Gochman (1980)	– Bueno de Mesquita (1981a)
	<i>Alliances and war</i>		<i>Arms races and war</i>	
	+ Ostrom and Houle (1978)		+ Wallace (1979)	
	– Levy (1981)		– Wilkinson (1980)	
National-level	<i>Democracies and conflict</i>	<i>War contagion</i>	<i>Power parity and war</i>	
	+ Rummel (1983)	+ Davis et al. (1978)	+ Naroll et al. (1974)	
	– Weede (1984)	– Levy/Morgan (1986)	– Bueno de Mesquita (1981b)	
	<i>Capitalism and war</i>	<i>Domestic conflict and war</i>	<i>Attribute distance and war</i>	
	+ Lenin (1939)	+ Tanter (1966)	+ Wright (1955)	
	– Wright (1942)	– Wilkenfeld (1969)	– Rummel (1972)	

+ = positive association

– = no association

Several conclusions emerge from this illustrative rendering of the field. First, a significant proportion of the studies continue to employ single independent variables. While most reason in terms of associations and correlations, they are intended to be causal: variations in *a* cause changes in *b*, usually defined as variations in the incidence of war. Second, the location of possible sources of war is infinitely expandable (we would have to add an extraterrestrial analytical level to include one study—whose author I prefer not to reveal—that correlated sunspot activity with the incidence of war). The range of explanatory variables runs from the genetic (not considered here) to the cosmic. Some ordering of the comparative significance of these types of variables is long overdue. Third, most studies employ variables from only one level of analysis. This leads to a number of problems, among which is the perennial issue of determinism and free will. Explanatory systems that emphasize structural and ecological variables such as the degree of power concentration in the international system are largely deterministic, as are genetic explanations of war. Studies that emphasize decision-making, values, and perceptions of policy-makers come closer to the free will end of the spectrum. How can the two be reconciled?

The prevalence of contradictory findings is the final problem. There are some important areas of consensus—what Singer has termed “reliable knowledge”—that have emerged from replication and modification of research designs and data. Great powers are more war-prone than other kinds of states. Studies have confirmed Woodrow Wilson’s hypothesis (Shaw 1924: 1, 379) that democracies do not go to war against each other. The hypothesis of systemic war contagion processes has been disconfirmed in numerous studies (Geller 1988: 366). At least two studies have demonstrated persuasively (though not without challenge, based on other data and methodologies) that, not surprisingly, borders play a role in conflict. Both alliance membership and contiguity increase the probabilities that any given state will become involved in a war should its neighbor and/or alliance partner be at war (Siverson et al. 1990). Some theories of relative power cycles among the great powers show rather impressively how, at certain “inflection points” in the relative rise and decline of great powers, serious wars are more likely to occur than at other times. The problems of adjusting foreign policies to new roles consistent with new power positions in some ways lead to a higher probability of war participation (Doran 1983). Beyond these and a few other areas of general agreement, explanations of variation in war remain contested either because there have been no findings meeting various tests of significance or because findings have been contradictory. In a significant proportion of the systemic studies of war, there is no verdict.

Is there the prospect that if we heed the perennial cry for more research we will uncover exciting new possibilities? Will the addition of new independent variables increase the storehouse of reliable knowledge? How should researchers deal with the problems of chronic incompatibility of findings? Are the solutions to these difficulties to be found primarily within the context of quantitative analysis? There is a common assumption that with adjustments here, a little methodological tinkering there, and the compilation of ever more studies, researchers will

eventually uncover the numerous mysteries that remain. But perhaps more fundamental questions need to be raised. Two in particular come to mind. First, is the emphasis on single ecological variables appropriate to the problem to be investigated? Second, what areas of investigation have been overlooked in the research agenda? This study examines three areas of pronounced neglect: (1) what are the issues that initially generate international conflict? what do men fight about? (2) what is the ‘meaning’ of war to those who resort to it? and (3) in what ways do the arrangements of peace serve as a source of future international conflict? We will examine each of these questions and the relationships between them below, but first we should explore in more detail the issue of ecological variables as explanations of war.

2.2 The Promises and Pitfalls of Ecological Variables

Sociological analyses of war generally link broad background variables of the international system or of its member states to the incidence of international violence. Typical variables include the degree of power concentration in an international system, numbers and types of alliances, balances and imbalances of power, relative rates of power change among key states, the presence or absence of arms races, degrees of status inconsistency, and the like. Other studies have concentrated on the link between national attributes (size, location, type of political system, and the like) and conflict/war. A derivative avenue of inquiry has examined the nature of relationships between attributes of nations. Most continue to employ single independent variables, even though at the theoretical level, monocausal theories of war have been proven inadequate for a long time. The usual answer to this problem is that correlation findings are not causal. They only indicate that the probabilities of war involvement or war initiation increase or decrease under certain specified systemic conditions or attribute profiles. Such results are not only interesting but potentially of theoretical significance. The combination of certain specified systemic and attribute conditions could certainly indicate which sorts of configurations increase or decrease international stability and the overall incidence of war in a particular era. But it does not tell us much about the sources of individual wars. Not many wars begin because there is a parity or preponderance of power, or because two parties share a frontier, or because they have differential growth rates (consider the unlimited and unknown numbers of wars that did *not* begin under such conditions). Knowledge of change in probabilities is important, but is it sufficient? Let us use a domestic analogy to make the point that statistical association between relatively static variables such as system structure or national attributes, and war incidence, while they may reveal certain patterns, do not in most cases offer a satisfactory form of explanation.

- I do not have a quarrel with my neighbor because he or she is older, is wealthier, or has a larger house. All of these attributes are in most cases irrelevant to the neighborly relationship, whereas behavior is critical. If my neighbor throws his

garbage on my porch, a quarrel is likely to ensue. We have an *issue* that generates conflict. The fact of contiguity and our attribute differences offer less satisfactory possibilities. The probabilities of a quarrel with a neighbor are no doubt greater than they would be with an unknown person living on the other side of town. But a probability difference is not a very satisfactory explanation, much less a cause. Some of the studies that link attributes to war incidence face this same problem. It is interesting to know, for example, that great powers are more war-prone than other kinds of states, but this fact can be explained also on a simple probability basis: great powers have more relationships and more interests to advance and protect, and hence we should expect them to resort to armed force more frequently than smaller states. An individual with a broad network of relationships is more likely to be involved in conflicts than is a hermit.

But these are relatively technical problems. More significant is the determinism implied in many of the studies, the presumed relevance and priority of ecological variables. Researchers assume that somehow, through decision-making and other processes, these systemic and national conditions are translated into foreign policy outputs and decisions to employ force. But how? And how are we to estimate their significance compared to more immediate stimuli (behaviors)? Of what relevance was the degree of systemic power polarization to the Argentine generals who decided to invade the Falkland Islands; or to President Nasser, who decided to have another go at Israel? or to the Iraqi president who launched a war against Iran in 1979? There is an element of the ecological fallacy in these questions (explaining an individual event in terms of general system properties), and yet they should be asked.

Many studies assume a high degree of constraint imposed by system characteristics, national attributes, and relational variables. They are reminiscent of the early voting behavior studies that linked socio-economic variables such as class, education, religion, and income to voting choices. But those early studies failed to ask voters *why* they voted in a particular way. The view of man in these studies is that of an automaton forced to behave in certain ways because of environmental characteristics or individual attributes. There is no acknowledgment that people have purposes, ideas, preferences, and dislikes; that they have concerns for personal welfare and sometimes even a calculated concern with the welfare of the broader society and its political system. What are the limits of choice? Peter the Great, Louis XIV, Charles XII, Bismarck, Wilson, and Hitler, just to mention a few, did as much to create system characteristics as they were constrained by them.

Why is it that some countries that share numerous attributes nevertheless have substantially different foreign policies? And why do some countries that share few attributes nevertheless have many foreign policy features in common? Libya and Tunisia share many characteristics and inhabit a common global system and regional subsystem. But for years their foreign policies differed except that they both sympathize with the plight of the Palestinians. Burma and Albania have virtually nothing in common, but in the 1960s and 1970s their foreign policy orientation of extreme isolation was almost identical. The list of examples could be elaborated at length, certainly enough to raise questions about the presumed critical

importance of ecological variables (or as is often the case, dichotomies) in explaining variations in the incidence of war.

Of the many people who have authored studies of the genre, J. David Singer is among the few who have directly addressed some of the questions raised above. He has argued that the contexts in which nations behave must be examined initially and their explanatory power discovered, because it will not be possible to gauge otherwise how much freedom of choice decision-makers enjoy. Singer's strategy of choosing to focus on ecological and structural background variables appears initially to be a matter of preference rather than one of the probable weight of explanation. Yet, Singer also argues that ecological variables are fundamental and institutional, while decision-making and other approaches concentrate on more immediate concerns. His distinction follows Thucydides' separation of the underlying and proximate causes of war. The underlying causes in Singer's view are clearly more important.

In 1970 Singer wrote (Singer 1970: 536; cf. Singer 1981: 4–5):

While fully concurring that an "ecological" theory of war would be incomplete at best, I would urge that serious attention to these attributes and relational variables is absolutely essential. To look at behavioral events alone, or as parts of interaction sequences, is to court disaster unless they are examined along with—and in the context of—the physical, structural, and cultural setting within which they occur ... Government decisions and behavior represent the intervening variables between a set of ecological incentives and constraints (domestic and global) on the one hand, and war or no war as the outcome of conflict, on the other; they can only be understood in that sort of context... Until we can get at the discrepancies (if any) between the objective incentives and constraints and the way in which they are perceived, we will be far from understanding the behavior which leads toward or away from war... Until certain of the key ecological variables are identified and their own explanatory power ascertained, we will never know exactly how much control remained in the hands of the decision-makers and how much of the variance is accounted for by their behavior.

Singer's general strategy is laudable, and there are numerous grounds for exploring the explanatory power of ecological variables. But until recently, few have followed Singer's admonitions. Only within the last several years have researchers begun to assess the *comparative* explanatory power of ecological and decision-making variables. This concern has already produced findings in explaining probabilistically the process of war diffusion (Siverson et al. 1990), with alliance membership (representing choice) having a greater impact on war participation than contiguity (representing an ecological variable). The results of another recent study suggest that ecological variables as explanations of war incidence fare rather poorly compared to approaches that employ Thucydides' notion of 'proximate' causes (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1988). Students of war are finally beginning to abandon single-variable and single-level types of analyses—twenty years after Singer pinpointed the problem. The pioneering work is as yet a mere trickle, but it is moving in an appropriate direction. However, the cultural context of war, noted by Singer as a critical research area, remains largely ignored (Singer 1981).

2.3 The Meanings of War

One of the problems of quantitative studies of war is that in order to obtain statistically sufficient universes of the dependent variable, they must remain fairly insensitive to different kinds of war. This is not the problem of legal definitions, or cut-off points in the number of casualties required to be included in the data set, or duration of hostilities. These are relatively technical issues, and since there have been so many wars since 1492, 1648, 1740, or 1816 (the usual starting dates for various data sets), the addition of several wars that had, let us say, 750 casualties instead of the usual 1,000 would probably not alter most findings.

The real difficulty is that through history the use of force in statecraft has had different meanings, and if this is so, the sources, causes, or correlates of war in one period cannot be easily transferred to another. Russia was at war against Turkey in 1713. Pakistan was at war against India in 1971. Both wars satisfy the usual criteria for inclusion in a data set. Similarly, two patients are 'ill' when they both have fevers significantly above normal body temperatures. But one has severe rash and acute lung congestion while the other has stomach pains. Both share one symptom—fever—which places them both in the 'ill' category. But the other symptoms suggest entirely different causes. The 'meaning' of the first illness is likely death; for the second, it is several more hours of discomfort until a medicine produces a cure. In 1713, the war arose because Russia was not fulfilling the terms of peace to which it had committed itself in a war the previous year. Turkey began the war in order to compel Russia to meet those terms. The stakes in the war were not very significant, however, and neither side believed that it was risking much in undertaking a contest of arms. In 1971, Pakistan fought for its survival (defined as East and West Pakistan). The meaning of the war for it was fundamentally different than it had been for either the Ottoman Empire or for Russia in 1713.

Statistical studies have generally avoided classifications of types of war in terms of their cultural and historical meaning. They have distinguished wars by the nature of participants, the track record of war participation by individual states, by geographical location, and the like. These have produced interesting and significant descriptive findings. But does it not seem possible that war is significantly rooted in its social and cultural context? Would it not make a difference in terms of war incidence whether decision-making elites view it as a duel, an avenue for fame, glory, and honor, an act of self-defense, the execution of a judgment, a crime, a technique of persuasion, or as an act of mutual suicide (Wright 1942: 11, 877)? Should it not make a difference in terms of war causes and frequency that Louis XIV in his youth regarded war as an alternative to the joys of the hunting season and that Frederick the Great saw it as an instrument for gaining personal reputation and glory, while Neville Chamberlain regarded it as a diplomatic and moral catastrophe? The commitment to search for regularities through statistical techniques over long periods of time, and the constraints imposed by the necessity of formal quantification render these and other significant differences of little scientific interest.

Discriminating between wars on the basis of their ‘meaning’ would no doubt require all sorts of arbitrary and ‘soft’ judgments, but this is not a sufficient ground for excluding the exercise.

Mansbach and Vasquez (1981, 1987) have suggested a rather different form of explanation. They point out that there are identifiable *processes* that lead to war. They present an explanation for the rise of contentious issues, identify variables that can explain under what circumstances they get placed on the global agenda, and how they are eventually resolved authoritatively including through the use of force. The “paths of war” include many of the symptoms located in the traditional and quantitative literatures, including arms races, misperception, the “Peloponnesus syndrome” of preventive war, and negative affect of the parties toward each other. These combine in various ways to produce an increased likelihood of war. As such, the processes are not ‘causes’ in the ordinary *a–b* model. Rather, the variables may link in complex ways. No single factor, whether structural, attribute, or relationship, can be isolated and identified as *the* cause. Any model of explanation that emphasizes dynamics and the interplay of variables across levels of analysis and over time is a distinct step forward.

Yet, one is still troubled by the lack of contextual factors and the assumption that all wars are equal. There may be many paths to war, diverse patterns of behavior that eventuate in contests of arms. And contexts do matter. Consider the Franco-Dutch War of 1672–1679. The war certainly became a process, but its origins do not fit well with the “paths to war” model. Louis XIV had been planning the war for almost four years prior to his aggression against the United Provinces. The war was not preceded by an arms race; there was no bargaining in a crisis situation; there were rough calculations of military capabilities, but no evidence of misperceptions. Although Louis and Colbert had their reasons for disliking the Dutch, none of them was sufficient to explain the outbreak of a major war. The ‘roi soleil’ disliked many regimes with which he did not go to war. The “paths to war” in 1672—and in many subsequent cases—were significantly different than those of 1914 or during the American intervention in Vietnam. These examples suggest the need for careful historical research, for studies employing the “focused comparison” method (George and Smoke, 1974), and for the development of more discriminating independent *and* dependent variables.

2.4 What Men Fight About: Issues and International Conflict

Notice that in most of the studies of the genre reviewed here there is a gap—namely human behavior—between the independent and dependent variables. Preponderances favor peace; arms races lead to war, as do resource shortages, the uneven development of capabilities among the great powers, status inconsistency, and many other things. Nowhere do we find the issues that excite men’s passions and fears, those

stakes that predispose them to take up arms to pursue or defend their causes and purposes. True, older studies of war classified the sources of war as political, religious, economic, and the like, but with the significant exception of Luard's study (1986) and the recent work of Mansbach and Vasquez, no one has taken up the challenge of exploring this difficult terrain. Why? Perhaps it is because issues are difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. However, to leave out issues is to leave out the stuff of politics. Adding issues to the research agenda may not tell us why some conflicts end in wars, while others do not—an important area of contemporary research—but it tells us what men are likely to fight about and how issues change over time.

One of the reasons that issues have been ignored, in my opinion, is the general social perspective toward war during much of our era, certainly since 1918. Academic researchers, peace movements, and many politicians for quite understandable reasons have depicted war variously as a disease, as a catastrophe, as a crime, in brief, as a form of *deviant* behavior. This perspective on war has arisen from the horrible experiences of twentieth-century war, the anticipated consequences of nuclear war, and the liberal nineteenth- and twentieth-century belief in human and humane progress. To many, war is an irrational activity, representing a rejection of politics for an entirely different domain of behavior. It must be, therefore, structures and processes that lead to war and not the deliberate calculations of policy-makers who might be bent on conquest. Our generally liberal views toward the purposes of states and regimes underestimates the extent to which there may be, as Leon Bourgeois argued during the debates on the League of Nations Covenant during the Paris peace conference in 1919, *états de mauvaise foi*, states committed to the use of force to achieve various purposes that are inconsistent with the safety and vital interests of other states.

A Clausewitzian approach does not regard war as a form of deviant behavior. War, rather, is characterized in instrumental terms as a rational, if not desirable, means of achieving or defending known purposes. It is “an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will... War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried by other means” (Clausewitz 1984: 75, 87).² Issues become immediately relevant in this view of war.¹ “The political object—the original motive/issue for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires” (ibid 81). This perspective on war approaches the free will end of an ecological/determinist—free will continuum. Politics and war are in the realm of constrained volition rather than in the realm of ecological determination. Policy-makers, whether princes, kings, Politbureaus, cabinets, or presidents, generally seek to defend, extend, or achieve certain known objectives. When these purposes and the means to implement them are incompatible with the values and interests of other actors, the probability of the use of force increases. Governments

²Clausewitz also discussed the development of war into an “absolute war,” in which there is not a trace of an overlap with the process of bargaining, or persuasion, or of “non-military pressure of any kind” (Gallie 1978: 52).

must then consider whether the stakes are worth all the risks entailed in war. Stakes are not exactly the same as issues (cf. Kummel 1976: 275). The United States intervened in Vietnam in order to achieve a stated set of purposes. The issue was defined in Washington as the continued independence of a political entity called the Republic of Vietnam. The issue for North Vietnam was the unification of a historic state and the construction of socialism in it. At stake for the United States, however, were its credibility, its prestige, and its sense of commitment to its allies. Issues generated the conflict, but the probability of the use of force by the United States increased dramatically only after North Vietnam and the Viet Cong had decided to achieve the unification of the country through military means. A number of choices were made along the way; there was nothing inevitable about American intervention. It is difficult to see exactly how ecological or attribute variables were compelling. The issues were necessary conditions for the intervention, and the issues combined with the stakes and the behaviors of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong were, taken together, sufficient conditions.

If we grant the validity of this perspective, then we may reverse the usual structure of explanation. Rather than looking at antecedent conditions, whether ecological, structural or attributional, we search for purposes and objectives. The explanation then becomes teleological: wars occur not “because of” but “in order to.” Others have mentioned this form of analysis but have seldom explored its implications in the study of war (Howard 1983: 12–16; Wright 1942: 11, 1236, 1291; Eagleton 1972: 16–17; Rummel 1976: 245). While we recognize that we may be speaking of two sides of the same coin, the emphasis on purpose steers us at least part of the way around the hurdle of the assumed explanatory power of ecological, genetic, and relational variables or dichotomies. Purposive behavior between two or more parties may lead to contention over certain values, or as most people use the term, over issues. The underlying problem for investigation is not “why do nations fight?” which is the usual way the question is put, but “what are they fighting about or over?”. To borrow from Mansbach/Vasquez (1981), we are less concerned with the issue of power than with the power of issues.

Such a formulation entails some difficulties. Here, let us raise the question posed by authors such as Geoffrey Blainey and Michael Howard, who argue that all issues can be boiled down to one mega-issue: whatever the window dressing, propaganda lines, and self-serving justifications for the use of force, the basic issue is always a power contest between two or more protagonists in which, according to Raymond Aron, the stakes are the “existence, the creation, or the elimination of states” (quoted in Howard 1983: 16). While the historical record shows numerous examples of the “Peloponnesian syndrome,” where states go to war preventively because they face an impending hegemony or preponderance of power by their main rival, there are many more instances when no such stakes are involved. Governments choose to employ force because they value interests and make claims against others that cannot be adjusted or compromised through diplomacy or other non-violent means. Preventive war does occur (Levy 1987), but in many instances state survival is not at stake. Other sorts of issues, implying considerably more limited values, are the source of most wars.

It is difficult to see, as just two illustrations of this conclusion, how the Somalia-Ethiopia War of 1978 or the Falklands War of 1982 can be explained satisfactorily as power contests. They were contests of power in the trivial sense that any trial of arms includes the application of military power. But state survival was neither the issue nor the stake that generated the war. If we explain war by reducing the phenomenon's origins to contests of power, then we simply avoid the critical questions since clearly not all power contests end in war.

I have left out of the analysis consideration of the many studies that focus on psychological, perceptual, and organizational variables. The vast literature has significantly increased our knowledge of decision-making processes in crisis situations, and the ways that information, organizational mores, misperceptions, and a variety of personality characteristics can increase the probability of making sub-optimal decisions. But even this literature contains some difficulties. There are at least three issues of note. First, most of the literature defines or assumes that decisions to employ force or to go to war are suboptimal. There is more than a hint of the Western twentieth-century view of war as deviant, irrational behavior. At a minimum, this literature depicts the use of force as an exceptional form of statecraft. Second, like the ecological and attribute studies, the policy-making studies of war focus on processes and ignore issues. They concentrate on information flows, the role of stereotypes and other psychological phenomena, bureaucratic in-fighting, and the like, but do not discuss the stakes involved in the contentious issues. And third, the literature has been strongly influenced by two notable crises, the events of August 1914 and Cuba in October 1962. A more recent source of data has been the numerous decisions that led ultimately to the American armed intervention in Vietnam. These cases have often been portrayed as paradigmatic examples of decisions to use force (or in Cuba, to avoid it). Yet, these examples are taken from an immense domain of possibilities. There is no evidence that they are typical or representative of the universe of cases.

There has been some significant work to correct the distorting effects of a narrow sample of cases. Jervis (1976) has used an extensive catalogue of historical evidence to examine the problems of crisis decision-making, while Lebow (1981) has been one of the few to compare explicitly across a number of cases taken from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The state-centric bias remains, however.

2.5 A Map of a Map

I have raised questions, not provided answers. My purpose is to complement previous work by demonstrating the importance of three problems that have been largely neglected in the study of war:

1. The role and types of issues that generate international conflict.

2. The change in socio-historical-intellectual milieux in which war is undertaken and which can sometimes help explain probabilistically why decisions to go to war are made. This is the ‘meaning’ of war, identified through attitudes toward the use of force among those who guide state policy.
3. The link between peace settlements and war. Peace settlements deal primarily with issues; how they deal with them may have an impact on the character and incidence of war in the postwar period. We are concerned here with the problem of building international orders—who defines them, how they were designed, on what sorts of diagnoses of the etiology of international conflict they were based, and how they operated.

The model of international politics that underlies the study of these neglected areas of war is as follows. All governments face certain sets of problems that they must solve, learn to live with, or adapt to. These include state-formation and nation-building; provision for the general welfare, broadly conceived; defense of the realm; maintenance of independence and autonomy; and perpetuation of the regime (Holsti 1990). Some governments have other purposes, which may include regional or global imperialism, ideological proselytization and conversion, search for prestige and status, and many others. In most cases purposes can be identified.

Decisions and actions are taken within certain socio-economic and diplomatic contexts. These offer both constraints and opportunities, but they are seldom determinative of individual decisions. Attributes offer fewer fruitful avenues of investigation. If they were significantly determining or highly constraining, we would expect states sharing them to behave in roughly similar fashion. Yet, as we look around the world, we can see many instances where states sharing both contexts (e.g., system polarity) and attributes (e.g., size, culture, economy, regime, and the like) have different foreign policies and profiles of war activity.

A model which assumes a fairly rational ordering of means to ends, which places purpose at the center of analysis, does not preclude folly (Tuchman 1984), misjudgment, wishful thinking, poor prediction, unanticipated consequences, and other foibles and shortcomings of governments and their caretakers. Apart from the problem that one’s short-run folly can always be a blessing in the long run, and vice versa, shortcomings do not vitiate the view that politics is an essentially purposeful activity.

The reader will see the ghost of Clausewitz in these comments. If foreign policy is a purposeful activity, then, in most cases so is war (I will reserve the problem of nuclear war for the concluding chapters). It is one of period of time, of resolving issues that were not amenable to other techniques of settlement. Purposive behavior between two or more parties usually leads to contention over certain values, or as most people use the term, over issues. Issues are not sufficient conditions for war. There are contentious issues facing governments daily, yet only a small proportion are contested or resolved through armed force. The critical problem of why some conflicts eventuate in war while others do not is a recent and critical avenue of inquiry, but is beyond the scope of this study. Each case rests on a complex calculus

of costs, advantages, and degrees of threat, risk, and the like. However, policy-makers' attitudes toward the use of force and how they 'define' war will critically affect those calculations.

2.6 Defining Issues

The investigation proceeds inductively. The typology of issues developed as the result of studying 177 wars and major armed interventions. This seemed a preferable strategy over deductively defining abstract categories of issues, such as those of Rosenau/James (1966), Mansbach/Vasquez (1981). There are two reasons for this choice. First, the purpose of this part of the study is descriptive rather than explanatory. The categories of issues are those used by historians who report the activities of policy-makers. Abstract categories remove the research one step further from the perspectives of those who make decisions to go to war. Second, some of the typologies of issues define procedures such as log-rolling, or outcome properties such as distributional results, rather than the values or stakes in contention. There is not always a very good fit between the typologies of academics and the issues as they were defined by the actors involved in conflict. Working inductively does not necessarily simplify the matter, however. Many conflicts involve multiple issues; issues change over time, particularly as a war progresses; disputants do not place the same value, or even identify the same values, as being in contention or jeopardy; some issues are so intermixed that attempts to separate them become arbitrary if not impossible; and weighing the relative importance of different issues injects the investigator's judgment as a substitute for the operating frames of reference of the decision-makers. Evidence can often lead to several interpretations.

I am aware of these problems and some others of less import as well. Were our concern chiefly to offer a precise issues synopsis of every single war in the European and global states system since 1648, more modesty would be displayed. Since the purpose is to draw a rough map of issue change over time, however, some differences of interpretation, some omissions, and some arbitrary judgments may be less lethal. A portrait or characterization is more important than detail.

Mansbach/Vasquez (1981) distinguish between *objectives* under contention, *values* to be satisfied by their allocation, *proposals* (statements of, or claims for, potential outcomes), and *stakes* and *positions*. Issues include all of these. They may involve several stakes and values, including status, prestige, security, honor, and the like. For our purposes, an issue can be defined as the stakes over which two or more parties contend. It includes values, but it is often difficult to identify or measure those. Mansbach and Vasquez also identify stakes as the core of the concept. Issues are the "contention among actors over proposals for the disposition of stakes among them." They include "the characteristics of the stakes involved" (1981: 59).

Stakes are usually fairly concrete—a piece of territory, the protection of an ethnic minority, the creation of a new state, the end of apartheid, and so forth. Values are more difficult to pinpoint, and their analysis always includes the formidable problem

of ends and means. They are, moreover, usually a by-product of conflict rather than the stake that gives rise to the conflict in the first place. The stakes in Louis XIV's attack on the United Provinces in 1672 involved territorial gains. At issue were specific pieces of territory Louis wanted to add to his domains. An important value at play in this conflict was the king's *gloire*. It was an important consideration in the court at Versailles and among all of Europe's ruling monarchs and princes. *La gloire* increased or diminished with the fortunes of war, but it was not the stake involved in the planning for the war. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson defined the American stakes in Vietnam as the freedom of South Vietnam and the security of the United States via the maintenance of a non-communist Southeast Asia. American prestige, status, and reputation for meeting commitments to allies were no doubt important considerations or values, but they were perceived more as the *consequences* of particular policies than as the issues which led to American intervention and the bombing of North Vietnam. We can assume that all conflicts involve calculations of status, prestige, and reputation, but they might be more relevant in helping to explain why wars continue rather than why they start. I will include such values only where they are designated as a bone of contention between the parties.

Statements by the parties involved, as reported in standard historical accounts, identify the issues. If they are unavailable, historians' judgments will serve as the basis for the data. In every case, at least two historical accounts have been used. In some instances the position of a government or other policy-making body is not possible to identify given the usual research constraints. Why, exactly, the Tatars joined Turkey in its war against Poland from 1671 to 1676 is not listed in standard English- and French-language diplomatic histories. Many cases of small partners joining a warring state, when no alliance commitment is involved, suggest simple opportunism. They go to war, or join an ongoing contest of arms, in order to get in on the spoils. Some of the histories are deficient in specifying all war participants' stakes. The operating rule guiding research is therefore to identify only the issues that generated the conflict between the original combatants. States that entered wars later are omitted from the analysis.

The distinctions between issues are usually clear, but in some instances rough judgments are required. There is also the problem of instrumentality and the lack of concordance between parties' perceptions of stakes. How, for example, would we classify the following situation as described by Boccalini in discussing the foreign policy of Venice in the fifteenth century?

The Venetians have as the ultimate purpose of their existence peace...For the Venetians it is enough to have territorial possessions large enough to assure Venice its freedom. They want to have power not out of ambition, to command others, but out of their striving not to become the subject of others (quoted in Ranum 1975: 28).

A Veronese claim to Venetian lands would raise a territorial issue for Verona. Yet the ultimate stake for Venice, as the quotation implies, would be to prevent itself from becoming the subject of others. Territory is instrumental; the Venetian stake is *autonomy*, not just a piece of land. In this case, we would classify the issue as one of autonomy for Venice and territory for both Venice and Verona.

If we enter the labyrinth of instrumental stakes, attempting to classify some as means, and others as ends, we might never emerge to make any conclusions. Others have mentioned the difficulties involved (Wright 1942: 11, 722–723, 857, 1290; Blainey 1973: 146–151, 248–249), and seem to have been scared off by the task. Bouthoul/Carrère (1976) use a simple classification scheme, but its categories are too coarse. In my view, the best way to proceed is to define the issues as the policy-makers defined them, allowing for the limits of historical evidence.

2.7 Data Sources: Geographical and Temporal Domains

The cases used as the basis for this study come from the European and global states systems from 1648 through 1989. There is a consensus among scholars of international relations that a single states system, or society of states, has existed since the treaties of Westphalia. It is defined by the security interdependence of its members, meaning generally that the foreign policy activities of one actor had some impact on others in the system. What the United Provinces' agents said and did in 1655 was noted and responded to by Venice, Brandenburg, Sweden, and many others in continental Europe and Britain. The Burmese-Thai Wars of the 1760s, on the other hand, had no impact in the European states system. The states system became global only in 1945 in the sense that conflicts on any continent were noted by and responded to by international institutions and by many individual states throughout the world.

In all, there are 177 cases, which form a reasonable sample compared to the 118 interstate and extra-systemic wars chronicled by Small et al. (1982) for the shorter period 1816–1980, and the 154 interstate wars, 1740–1975, listed by Bouthoul and Carrère. It is also a reasonable proportion of Luard's comprehensive list of violence that includes a massive total of 470 cases from 1648. These include numerous rebellions, civil wars, and wars where little or no documentation in a major European language is available in the standard histories. Until the post-1918 period, all wars involved 1,000 or more casualties; some major interventions were less costly in lives, but involved the physical occupation by one country's armed forces in a foreign jurisdiction for a minimum of two weeks. Further discussion of the choices for the post-1918 period is contained in Chaps. 11 and 12.

The selection of 1648 as the starting point is less contentious than the selection of cases. That date is commonly recognized as the official birthday of the modern states system. The principles of sovereignty and legal equality were enunciated in the Treaties of Osnabrück and Münster. The principles became major legal and philosophical pillars in the struggle to create modern states, and provided the basic norms for the conduct of their mutual relations.

2.8 Attitudes Toward War

The ‘meaning’ of war refers to the policy-makers’ conceptualizations of war—what type of activity and ethical connotations it involves, for example—and their attitudes toward the use of force. Most of the literature on this subject examines popular, philosophical, or academic opinions about war (e.g., Gooch, n.d). Public moods may indeed act as a constraint on or support of policy-makers: witness the strong sentiments of pacifism in Great Britain during the 1930 s. But since public participation in matters of war and peace is a phenomenon of only the last two centuries, and only in a few states, it is not a sufficient guide to officials’ attitudes. Nor is it safe to assume that public and governmental attitudes always coincide.

Attitudes do not always lead directly to actions. However, they offer rationales and justifications for the use of force. They also influence the calculus of costs, risks, and benefits when it comes time to decide whether or not to unsheathe the sword. The attitudes toward the use of force by Japanese leaders in the 1930s offer a stark contrast, for example, to those of their British colleagues in the same era. I will not try to explain the origins of those attitudes. Description at this stage will have to suffice.

2.9 Issues, War, and Peace: Creating International Orders

Most wars end with formal negotiations leading to peace treaties. These treaties perform several functions. They establish, in most cases definitively, the losses and gains suffered or achieved in the contest of arms. They specify the outcome of war, or as Mansbach/Vasquez (1981, chap. 8) put it, they represent ‘decisions’ that authoritatively allocate values. Many of the issues that generated the preceding war are resolved. The agreements also legitimize war outcomes in the sense that the parties are expected to meet the commitments undertaken in the negotiated or imposed documents. Subsequent efforts to evade commitments then justify reprisals, sanctions, and possibly further war. Finally, peace treaties often reaffirm international norms and conventions, including prior peace treaties (cf. Randle 1973).

But some peace treaties represent more than the settlement of the issues that generated a previous war. They are expressions of the fact that, despite the rather dismal record of war occurrence, wars are great learning experiences. The costs, strains, and often the negative outcomes for all parties encourage governments to think about methods of preventing resort to arms in the postwar world. Peace treaties may thus include new sets of principles, procedures, or territorial distributions upon which to organize the postwar relations between states. These efforts reflect both the nature of the issues that gave rise to previous wars, and significant changes in the attitudes of diplomatic elites toward the use of force in subsequent international relationships. Expressions such as “permanent amity,” “the permanent

repose of Europe,” and “a just and lasting peace” are sprinkled throughout major peace treaties. They are not only ritual statements, but acknowledgments that there should be better ways than through armed combat to resolve international conflicts. They are also statements of hopes and expectations that the character of international relations will change as a result of the lessons learned through costly wars. The great multilateral peace conferences were, in brief, attempts to build new international orders. The main elements of these orders include the definition of norms regarding the use of force; systems of governance for the society of states; conflict-resolving mechanisms and procedures; the resolution of war-producing issues; specific terms of settlement that will preclude wars of revenge by the losers (assimilation); and some consideration of the types of issues that may generate conflict in the future.

My purpose is not to present yet another historical account of peace conferences, but to assess the designs, plans, and assumptions about war and international order that were in play at them. Theories of peace at the conferences and the resulting treaties were usually based on policy-makers’ explicit or implicit theories of war, or at least on their evaluation of the causes of the most recent war. These conferences represented the learned diplomatic wisdom of the day about war and peace. It was not the writings of academics and philosophers, which were notoriously ignored in most peacemaking efforts, but the ideas of the policy-makers themselves that mattered. They were the ones who not only settled the terms of the preceding war, but who also tried to hammer out—never ignoring their own state’s vital interests—some sort of system or set of procedures that would either prevent future armed conflict or that could help manage or limit it. In brief, we will explore the theories of international relations of the peacemakers.

Exercises in international order building have seldom been typical of bilateral peace conferences, or even in diplomatic gatherings following multilateral wars that were limited in time, location, and/or costs. Moreover, those peace treaties that were basically armistices seldom contained provisions for ameliorating or accommodating the issues that generated a war. Some peace treaties, after all, were designed not to allocate values authoritatively, but to provide a pause until the next round of war could be undertaken to try to finish the job. They were stratagems and phases in continuing conflicts over irresolvable issues. Many of the peace treaties between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, were of this kind, as were the treaties that slowly brought to an end the Swedish Empire of the seventeenth century.

The great peace conferences that attempted to come to grips with the fundamentals of war and peace include Osnabrück and Münster 1644–1648, the more limited conferences that resulted in the treaties collectively known as the Peace of Utrecht (1713–1715), the two Treaties of Paris and the Congress of Vienna that succeeded the Napoleonic Wars, the conference of Paris in 1919, and the 1945 San Francisco conference, including its antecedents, during the Second World War. These constitute the focus of the inquiry (Fig. 2.1).

The analytical framework for the study can be characterized as a peace-war loop: issues generate conflict, when two or more governments seek to achieve

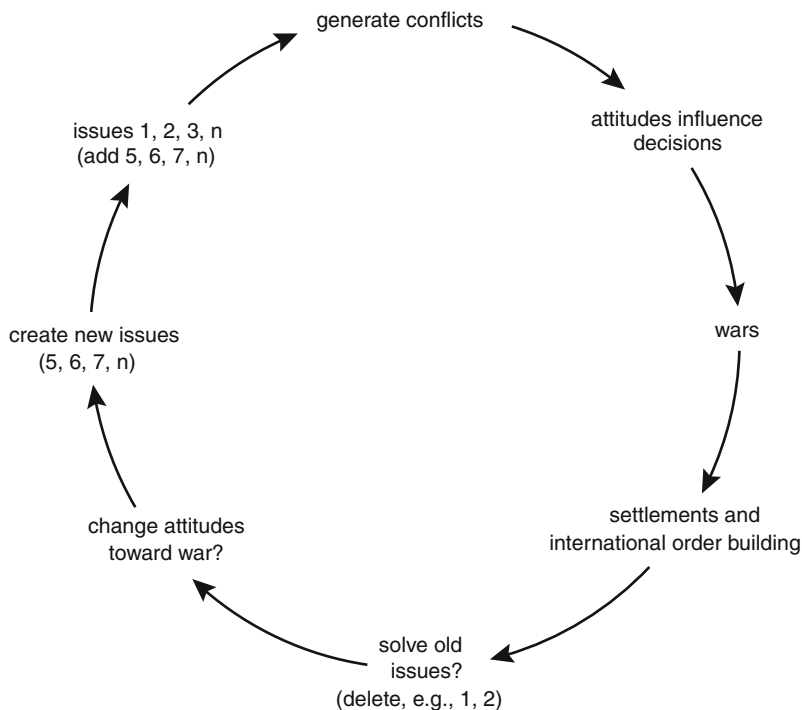


Fig. 2.1 The peace and war cycle

incompatible objectives (e.g., a piece of territory) or stake out mutually exclusive positions on a particular problem (e.g., rights of neutral shipping and trade in wartime). In any era, some types of issues will predominate as conflict-producers.

Whether or not the contests over the issues eventuate in war is in part a function of policy-makers' attitudes and conceptualizations of war. The hypothesis is that the more favorable the attitudes toward war, the greater its incidence. But the kinds of issues also affect incidence. Contests over strategic territory, for example, are more likely than disagreements over trade policy to generate contests of arms. Security is a more important value in most eras than is welfare.

Wars end in peace. Peace treaties and agreements usually resolve the issues that gave rise to the previous war. Some also try to create new international orders, and they develop new norms, reflecting changes in attitudes regarding the future use of force. An even smaller number try to anticipate issues of the future and develop means for dealing with them. How these conferences deal with past issues and with the defeated combatants may also be critical in influencing the nature of postwar international relationships. In some instances the great peace settlements set the stage for future eras of conflict and war. In these cases, peace becomes the father of war. Our task is to assess each conference in terms of its contribution both to the order-building enterprise and to the subsequent pattern of warfare in the system.

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