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## RESEARCH AGENDA

My research focuses primarily on the causes of interstate war and on foreign policy decision-making, but also includes some related topics. Below I summarize my current research agenda and place it in the context of my earlier work. I organize my scholarly work into the following categories: historical evolution of war; dynamics of power, including balance of power theory, preventive war, and power transition theory; domestic politics and war, including the domestic political economy of war and peace; the psychology of decision-making; the First World War; grand strategy in the 1930s; and my Handbook of Great Power Wars project. Please see my C.V. (<http://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/>) for a more complete list of my publications and work in progress, and for the names of all coauthors.

### Historical Evolution of War

William R. Thompson and I have recently completed a study of the evolution of war over ten millennia. The primary theme of *The Arc of War: Origins, Evolution, Transformation* (Chicago, 2011) is the coevolution of war, political economy, military and political organization, and weaponry from early tribal systems to the contemporary period. This study builds on my coauthor's earlier work and on my own research on patterns and trends in war during the last five centuries, including my book *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*.

### Dynamics of Power

My ongoing research projects on balance of power theory, preventive war, and power transition theory grow out of my long-standing interest in the dynamics of power in international relations. Thompson and I are working on a book on the **balance of power** that builds on my earlier reconceptualization of balance of power theory, and on our joint studies of balancing against hegemonic threats in both the European and global systems during the past five centuries. Our key findings, which we summarize in our recent book, *Causes of War* (2010), are that great powers have generally tended to balance against hegemonic threats in the European system but not in the global system, and that there is no systematic pattern of balancing against weaker concentrations of power in the European system. An important implication is that the absence of systematic great power balancing against the unprecedented power of the United States after the end of the Cold War is not an anomaly in balance of power theory. In the book we will supplement our earlier quantitative analyses with well-selected case studies that evaluate threat perceptions.

I am continuing my long standing research program on **preventive war**, which has attempted to clarify the meaning of the concept, specify the conditions under which states are most likely to adopt a strategy of preventive war, question the hypothesis that democracies do not fight preventive wars, and examine the role of preventive logic in

several historical cases. My current work focuses on the neglected question of what it is that preventers are trying to prevent. That is, what dimensions of adverse power shifts do declining states find most threatening – military, economic, financial, or demographic? A second question concerns the perceptions and behavior of the target, which have been neglected in a literature that focuses primarily on the preventer. Eventually, I plan to integrate all of this work into a book length treatment of preventive war. I will also continue my related work on **power transition theory**, about which I have written several critical reviews.

### **Domestic Politics and War**

I am currently engaged in several research projects relating to the domestic political sources of state foreign policies and war. My work on **politically-motivated opposition to war** grows directly out of my work on the diversionary theory of war. If political leaders sometimes have incentives to resort to military force against external actors to bolster their domestic political support, domestic oppositions may have incentives to oppose war. After publishing an earlier article summarizing the argument and demonstrating its relevance in a range of historical cases, I am now working with two students to construct a formal model of the process. We are also working on an empirical study that explores the relationship between alternative institutional arrangements and state war propensity, with opposition influence and behavior as an intervening variable.

I am working with another student, Patricia Young, on a different pattern of strategic behavior between governments and oppositions, summarized by our title “When Leaders Want Peace and Oppositions Want War.” We came across this pattern as a by product of our earlier study of the Anglo-Spanish rivalry leading to the War of Jenkins’ Ear (1739-48), which is part of my project on the **militarization of commercial rivalries**. That project, initiated in my earlier work on the 17<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Dutch rivalry, was a reaction to the rivalry literature’s neglect of both the commercial roots and domestic drivers of many strategic rivalries. The 1652 and 1665 Anglo-Dutch wars and the 1739 Anglo-Spanish wars are often referred to as “pure trade wars,” but a careful study of the processes through which a commercial rivalry escalated to a strategic rivalry and then to war reveal the importance of both domestic political and strategic factors in each.

My work on the militarization of commercial rivalries is part of my larger research project on the **political economy of war and peace**. So far that project involves one set of studies with Michael Barnett on the **domestic political economy of alliance formation**, which was a reaction against the standard realist view of alliances as instruments of capability aggregation against adversary states. I have also worked with Katherine Barbieri on a study of the **impact of war on trade**. Our quantitative and qualitative studies demonstrated that that trading with the enemy often continues during wartime, contrary to the predictions of both liberal and realist theories of economic interdependence and peace.

### **The Psychology of Decision-Making**

My earlier applications of research on prospect theory, learning, and time horizons to international relations have given me an increasing interest in the psychology of judgment and decision-making. I am coeditor (with Leonie Huddy and David Sears) of the second edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, which we hope to get out by the end of 2012, and I am completing my own review essay for the volume.

Drawing on my earlier study (with Uri Bar-Joseph) of the role of deliberate and conscious action in state intelligence failures, and incorporating organizational theory as well as political psychology, Norrin Ripsman and I are exploring British and French intelligence failures in the 1930s. We question the common argument that the politicization of intelligence contributed to flawed British assessments of the German threat, and in the process try to disentangle the politicization of intelligence and motivated reasoning, which are often confounded in the literature.

### **The First World War**

With the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War I approaching, I am planning a number of analytically driven studies of the causes of the war. One or two focus on the theme of preventive war and address several interrelated questions: What was the causal impact of preventive logic in the German and Austro-Hungarian decisions for war in 1914? How important were these factors relative to those in the Balkans in the processes leading to war, and how did they interact? What dimensions of relative decline were German leaders most concerned with – military, economic, financial, or demographic? A second question concerns strategic interaction. If German leaders were driven by “better now than later” logic with respect to Russia, why did Russian leaders adopt an aggressive strategy rather than delay a military confrontation until 1917, when they would be much stronger?

Another, more ambitious project would involve a comparative study of the crises of 1905, 1908, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, motivated by my belief that any satisfactory explanation of the outbreak of World War I needs to explain why these earlier crises, where many international and domestic conditions were similar, did not escalate to a great power war. My tentative plan is to assess the extent to which the rationalist framework developed in my 1990/91 article (“Preferences, Choices, and Constraints in July 1914”) can explain why a great power war broke out in 1914 but not before.

### **British and French Grand Strategy in the 1930s**

Building on our recent articles, Norrin Ripsman and I are working on a book on British and French grand strategy in response to the rapid rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Our basic argument is that British leaders believed that by the mid-1930s Nazi Germany had already surpassed Britain in power and that it was too late for a military confrontation. The combination of German economic weaknesses and a vigorous British rearmament program would reverse the German advantage by the late 1930s, however,

allowing Britain to deter German aggression if possible or fight a war under more favorable circumstances if necessary. Thus British appeasement was driven by a “buying time” strategy, while the French were dependent on Britain.

### **Handbook of Great Power Wars**

Finally, in an ongoing and long-term project, I hope to follow up on the quantitative study of five centuries of great power war (1983) with a multi-volume treatment of all 55-60 great power wars in the modern system since 1495. For each I will include basic data, chronologies, an interpretive essay on the outbreak, escalation, and consequences of the war, and an annotated bibliography. At this point I have decent bibliographies for all of the wars, detailed chronologies for about forty wars, and interpretive essays for about ten of them. There is nothing like this anywhere in the literature. This will take many years, and I may begin by focusing on the ten hegemonic wars in the last five centuries of the modern system. One short term project is to put my revised **war data** in electronic format and make it available online.