Ever since Thucydides' (1996) account of the Peloponnesian War over 2,400 years ago, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have studied war in the hope of facilitating efforts to prevent its occurrence, reduce its frequency, or mitigate its consequences. A complete understanding of war needs to draw on many disciplinary perspectives, but political science is central. Clausewitz’s ([1832]1976) influential conceptualization of war as a “continuation of politics by other means,” along with the common definition of war as large-scale or sustained violence between political organizations,¹ suggest that war is intrinsically political. To explain war, we must explain why political leaders choose to adopt military force rather than other strategies to achieve their desired ends.

The study of war in international relations varies enormously in theoretical orientation, methodological approach, ontological assumptions, and empirical domain. This reflects broader trends in the field, in the discipline, and in the social sciences, as international relations scholars have engaged in increasingly productive dialogues with scholars in comparative politics and with economists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and historians. The study of war also reflects significant cross-national differences in theory and method (Wæver, 1998; Suganami, 1996).

There has been a notable shift in the kinds of wars that scholars study. This parallels the significant shift in warfare since World War II – from the major powers to minor powers, from Europe to other regions, and from interstate war to intrastate war.² Scholars now devote as much or more attention to civil wars, ethnic wars, and terrorism as to the interstate wars, and particularly great power wars, that previously dominated international conflict research.³ Scholars have also increasingly questioned the relevance of traditional “Clausewitzian” conceptions of warfare, while debating the extent to which the “new wars” are radically different from “old wars” (Kaldor, 1999; Kalyvas, 2001; Münkler, 2004; Duyvesteyn and Angstrom, 2005).

The theoretical literature on war is far too vast to cover in its entirety in a single essay. I limit my attention to theories of interstate war, in part because civil war and terrorism are covered elsewhere in this volume, and in part because the primary explanations for these different forms of warfare remain quite
distinct, though there has been some recent convergence. Continued attention to interstate war is also warranted by its potential systemic consequences and its human and economic destructiveness, and by the number of interstate disputes in the contemporary world that have the potential to escalate.

Within interstate war, I focus primarily on the causes of war, which has dominated the attention of conflict theorists for many years, though recently scholars have begun to give more attention to the conduct of war and the termination of war (King, 1997; Goemans, 2000; Reiter, 2009; Stanley, 2009). My orientation is more explanatory than normative. I focus on theories that attempt to explain variations in war and peace over time and space, as opposed to theories that try to explain "enabling" conditions for war (Suganami, 1996: ch. 1), "root" causes of war, or the evolutionary origins of propensities toward aggression (Gat, 2006). The question guiding this essay is "Who Fights Whom, Where, When, and Why?" (Bremer, 2000).

I examine a handful of leading research programs in some detail rather than provide an encyclopedic coverage of a larger number of approaches. I focus on realist theories of war, liberal theories about the "democratic peace" and the "capitalist peace," the bargaining model of war, and individual-level psychological theories. Admittedly, this still leaves a lot of ground uncovered. At the governmental level, I neglect the dynamics of decision making in bureaucratic organizations and small groups (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius, 1997) and the role of strategic culture (Johnston, 1995; Rosen, 1996; Kier, 1997). At the societal level, I neglect Marxist-Leninist theories (Lenin, 1939; Semmel, 1981), the role of domestic interest groups and ideology (Snyder, 1991; Lobell, 2004; Haas, 2005; Narinzy, 2007), and the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996). I give little attention to constructivist approaches (Schroeder, 1994; Katzenstein, 1996; Farrell, 2005; Lebow, 2003, 2010) or to feminist approaches, in part because these are covered in Part I of this volume.

REALIST THEORIES OF WAR

The realist tradition, which includes intellectual descendants of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau, has long dominated the study of interstate war (Vasquez, 1998). Realists share a common set of assumptions: the key actors in world politics are sovereign states or other territorially based groups that act rationally to advance their security, power, and wealth in an anarchic international system. Given uncertainties regarding the current and future intentions of the adversary, political leaders focus on short-term security needs, adopt worst-case thinking, engage in a struggle for power and security, and utilize coercive threats to influence the adversary and maintain or advance their interests and reputations (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

The vast majority of realists acknowledge that war can come about through either predatory aggression, in which a dissatisfied state concludes that it can best advance its interests through military force, or through an inadvertent conflict spiral, in which two relatively satisfied states, each interested primarily in maintaining its security, may still end up in war as a result of an escalating conflict spiral. Uncertainty about the adversary's intentions may lead a purely "security-seeking" state to increase its military power solely for defensive purposes, but its adversary often perceives those actions as threatening and responds with its own defensive actions, triggering an action-reaction cycle. The resulting "security dilemma" (Jervis, 1978; Glaser, 2010) and conflict spiral, which can be exacerbated by psychological dynamics (Jervis, 1976), can be difficult to reverse and can escalate to an "inadvertent war" that neither side wanted or expected at the onset of the dispute.
Realists are divided over how compelling anarchic structures and the security dilemma actually are in forcing states into conflictual relationships. "Offensive realists" argue that the international system is so hostile and unforgiving that uncertainty about the future intentions of the adversary combined with extreme worst-case analysis lead great powers to adopt offensive strategies and pursue regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001). "Defensive realists" argue that international anarchy does not in itself force states into conflict and war. Balancing, evaluation of adversary intentions independently of capabilities, defensive strategies, and careful signaling generally work to provide security. If states behave aggressively, it is not because of external threats but instead because of domestic pressures and pathologies. Defensive realists argue that war will not arise in a world of purely security-seeking states in the absence of domestically induced revisionist goals or extreme misperceptions of external threats (Snyder, 1991; Schweller, 1996; Van Evera, 1999; Glaser, 2010). The analytic distinction between predatory and security-seeking states is an ideal type, of course. As Snyder and Jervis (1999: 21) argue, "the security dilemma gives rise to predators, and predation intensifies the security dilemma."

A pure "preventive war" – one motivated only by the anticipation of a negative power shift, the fear of its consequences, and the temptation to degrade the adversary’s power while the opportunity is still available – is another path through which anarchic structures alone might induce war (Copeland, 2000; Levy, 2006a). However, Kydd (1997: 148) argues, from a defensive realist perspective, that "preventive wars sparked by fears about the future motivations of currently benign states almost never happen." The preventive motivation leads to war only in conjunction with existing hostilities or conflicts of interest. The "purest" case of a preventive attack was Israel's strike against Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981.

The core realist proposition is that variations in the distribution of power help to explain variations in the frequency of war and other forms of international behavior (Waltz, 1979, 1988; Mearsheimer, 2001). As many critics have argued, however, the distribution of power alone does not explain enough of the variance in war and peace across time and space, much less system transformations, and in this sense war and other outcomes are underdetermined in neorealist theory (Keohane, 1986; Buzan, Jones, and Little, 1993; Ruggie, 1998).

Realists have increasingly come to acknowledge this limitation, and have begun to incorporate other variables in an attempt to explain more of the variation in international conflict. Thus, "defensive realists" emphasize the role of the offensive–defensive balance (Van Evera, 1999; Brown et al., 2004) and domestic variables (Snyder, 1991), and "neoclassical realists" emphasize the intervening role of the state in evaluating the external distribution of power, the external threats and opportunities it creates, and the capacity to mobilize societal resources for state ends (Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, 2009). The incorporation of domestic variables into realist theory, however, raises questions about the theory's "hard core" assumptions (Lakatos, 1970), and about the point at which a significantly modified realist theory ceases to be realist.

**Balance of power and hegemonic theories**

It is useful to distinguish between "balance of power realism" and hegemonic-power-based theories (Levy and Thompson, 2010: 38). Balance of power approaches include both classical theories as formulated by Morgenthau (1948), Gillick (1955), Claude (1962), Aron (1973), and Bull (1977), and the more systematic structural realism of Waltz (1979). Hegemonic theories include both self-consciously realist theories like hegemonic stability theory (Gilpin, 1981)
and other theories that posit hierarchical international orders but that reject the realist label, like power transition theory (Organski and Kugler, 1980) and long cycle theory (Thompson, 1988).

Balance of power theories stress the importance of anarchy and posit that the avoidance of hegemony is the primary goal of states (or at least of the great powers) and that the maintenance of an equilibrium of power in the system is an essential means to that end. The theory predicts that states will build up their arms and form alliances to balance against those who constitute the primary threats to their interests and particularly against any state which threatens to secure a hegemonic position over the system. Balance of power theorists argue that the balancing mechanism almost always works successfully to avoid hegemony, either because potential hegemons are deterred by their anticipation of a military coalition forming against them or because they are defeated in war after deterrence fails. Balance of power theories have been criticized on a number of grounds (Vasquez and Elman, 2003), but since the mid-1990s there has been a resurgence of interest in these approaches (Little, 2007; Kaufman, Little, and Wohlfirth, 2007).

Hegemonic theories share realist assumptions but de-emphasize the importance of anarchy while emphasizing authority structures and system management within a hierarchical order. The most influential hegemonic theory is power transition theory (Organski and Kugler, 1980; Kugler and Lemke, 1996; Tammen et al., 2000). Hegemons commonly arise and use their strength to create a set of political and economic structures and norms that enhance both the stability of the system and their own interests. Differential rates of growth lead to the rise and fall of hegemons (Kennedy, 1987), and the probability of a major war is greatest at the point when the declining leader is being overtaken by a rising and dissatisfied challenger. Either the challenger initiates a war to bring its benefits from the system into line with its rising military power, or the declining leader initiates a preventive war to block the rising challenger while the opportunity is still available (though most power transition theorists minimize the role of preventive war strategies). Debates about the rise of China and its implications for the future of the international system and the Sino-American relationship have generated renewed interest in power transition theory.11

Hegemonic theorists argue, quite correctly, that balancing often fails and that hegemomies often form, at least outside of Europe, as emphasized by recent research (Watson, 1992; Kaufman, Little, and Wohlfirth, 2007). The discrepancy between the European system and some non-Western systems has led “English School” theorists to argue that the difference is due to the emergence in European society of an institutionalized balance of power, defined by a system of diplomacy and set of rules and norms that evolved beginning in the sixteenth century (Bull, 1977; Little, 2007).12

Balance of power and hegemonic theories appear to posit contradictory hypotheses about the consequences of concentrations of power in the international system.13 These contradictions disappear if we recognize that most applications of the two theories define the key concepts of power and system differently. Most balance of power theories have a strong Eurocentric bias and implicitly conceive of power in terms of land-based military power and of hegemony in terms of dominance over Europe. Most applications of hegemonic theories define hegemony in terms of dominance in global finance, trade, and naval power. Power transition theory, for example, uses gross national product per capita as its indicator of power (Kugler and Lemke, 1996), and long cycle theory uses naval power and leading economic sector technologies (Rasler and Thompson, 1994). Thus, their hypotheses about power concentrations refer to different dimensions of power in different systems. A combined hypothesis is that the European system is most stable under an equilibrium of military power,
whereas the global system is most stable in the presence of a single dominant economic and naval power. Levy and Thompson (2010: ch. 2) argue that land powers and sea powers have different interests and pose different threats to others. They find a systematic tendency toward balancing against high concentrations of power in the European system but not in the global system.

While empirical studies have demonstrated that structural systemic theories of war have only been able to account for a limited amount of the variation in war and peace, even among the great powers (Bennett and Stam, 2004), rational choice theorists have questioned the logical coherence of structural theories and their absence of a clear set of microfoundations. Those microfoundations are developed in the bargaining model of war, to which we now turn.

THE BARGAINING MODEL OF WAR

The bargaining model of war begins with the recognition that war is a costly and inefficient means of resolving conflict because it destroys resources that might otherwise be distributed among adversaries. It should be possible in principle for contending parties to reach a negotiated settlement that avoids the costs of war and that is therefore mutually preferred to war. This leads Fearon (1995) to argue that the central question that any theory of war must answer is why opposing parties are sometimes unable to reach such a settlement and instead end up in war. Fearon recognized that psychological variables might provide one answer to this question and domestic politics another, but he focused on rational unitary actors. He identified three sets of conditions under which they could end up in war: private information and incentives to misrepresent that information, commitment problems, and indivisible issues.

The private information path to war refines and formalizes Blainey’s (1988) emphasis on disagreements about relative power and hence about the likely outcome of fighting as the fundamental cause of war. Actors that share similar expectations regarding the outcome of war should be able to negotiate a settlement that gives each party the same payoffs that it expects to receive from war but without its economic and human costs. Fearon argued that private information can generate different expectations about relative power and the likely outcome of war and, therefore, different incentives to reach a negotiated settlement. Sharing information might eliminate the gap in expectations, but it might also undercut a state’s negotiating position or give the adversary the opportunity to compensate for its weaknesses by securing allies, changing its strategy, or initiating a preemptive strike. If one or both actors conclude that it can do better by fighting than by accepting the best settlement the adversary is willing to offer, it will presumably fight unless additional concessions are forthcoming.

Bargaining theorists have applied the private information argument to the conduct and termination of war as well as to the causes of war. The process of fighting reveals information about relative military capabilities and hence the likely outcome of war. This leads to a convergence of expectations about the result of future fighting and consequently to an increase in the likelihood of the termination of war based on a negotiated settlement (Wagner, 2000; Goemans, 2000; Stantchev, 2003; Reiter, 2009).

A second path to war involves the commitment problem (Féaron, 1995; Wagner, 2000; Powell, 2006). If adversaries anticipate a shift in the relative distribution of power between them, they may have difficulty reaching a settlement that they mutually prefer to war, even in the absence of private information. A rising but weaker actor, recognizing that it is likely to lose any war fought now and that it will be in a stronger negotiating position later, has incentives to avoid war. The declining stronger state has incentives to reach a settlement that freezes
the status quo, but it cannot be sure whether its rising adversary would honor the agreement into the future, or whether it would initiate a new set of demands backed by its stronger power. The rising power might promise to abide by that settlement, but there is no mechanism to enforce that promise after the adversary acquires the military strength to back its demands for greater concessions. The only concessions that are likely to satisfy the declining state are those that would restrict the growth of the rising state, but the latter is unlikely to accept any settlement that would restrict its future bargaining power. This commitment problem, which is the key mechanism driving preventive war strategies, reduces the probability of a negotiated settlement and increases the probability of war. The concept has also been applied to ethnic conflicts (Fearon, 1998).

Fearon’s (1995) third rationalist path to war involves indivisible issues. To be acceptable to both parties, a settlement requires a division of goods that is proportionate to the likely outcome of the war. This is theoretically possible if and only if the issues in dispute are infinitely divisible. Material goods are often divisible, and issue linkages (Morgan, 1994) or side payments might facilitate a settlement, but many ideological and religious issues are not divisible (Toft, 2006). Most bargaining theorists, however, give less attention to the indivisibility of issues than to international problems and commitment problems as distinct paths to war.

The bargaining model of war is a major contribution to the literature on international conflict at both the interstate and intrastate levels. It directs students of the causes of war to the important question of why the contending parties cannot reach a negotiated settlement that both parties prefer to war. It also generates some important testable implications for the conduct of war and the termination of war. It is important to note, however, that Fearon’s (1995) model applies only to rational unitary actors. If leaders perceive that the domestic political benefits from war outweigh the costs of war, they might have political incentives to go to war despite the costs of war to society as a whole. Relatedly, leaders might prefer to back away from an earlier threat in order to help resolve a crisis, but be precluded from doing so by the anticipation of domestic “audience costs” (Fearon, 1994). In addition, psychological distortions in information processing, including tendencies toward overconfidence (Jervis, 1976; Johnson, 2004) and toward allowing evaluations of the desirability of war outcomes to shape estimates of the probability of those outcomes, might lead actors to conclude that they might get more from fighting than from a negotiated settlement. That is, the disagreements about relative power that can lead to war might result not only from private information and the incentives to misrepresent that information, as the bargaining model expects, but also from cognitive biases and motivated reasoning (Lake, 2010/11).

LIBERAL THEORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

Liberals have always questioned the pessimism of realist international theory and argued that under certain domestic and international conditions, and with the appropriate strategies, states can overcome the pressures of anarchy and significantly reduce the frequency and intensity of warfare. A classic statement of the liberal view is Kant’s (1795/1949) conception of perpetual peace based on democratic institutions, free trade, and international law and institutions. Social scientists began a rigorous and systematic investigation of the empirical validity of Kantian international theory in the 1980s with the democratic peace research program. Within a decade they began to test the hypothesis that economic interdependence promotes peace, explore the links between international institutions and conflict, and combine these into a single integrated liberal theory of peace and war. Here, I focus on the
hypotheses that democratic institutions and economic interdependence each promote peace. I leave aside arguments about the pacifying effects of law and international institutions.14

The democratic peace

The "democratic peace" emerged as a coherent and quite visible research program in the 1980s after scholars began to compile systematic evidence that democracies rarely if ever go to war with each other. This was an extraordinarily strong empirical correlation, one that was robust for a range of definitions of democracy, in a field that had identified few law-like relationships. The finding attracted additional interest because it contradicted realist assumptions that state behavior was insensitive to regime type and because it provided a strong foundation for an alternative liberal research program. Scholars devoted enormous energies to validating the basic finding, identifying the empirical domains over which it is valid, and identifying possible exceptions to the democratic peace proposition and other patterns associated with democratic war behavior.15 Most analysts have concluded that there are no unambiguous cases of wars between democracies (Ray, 1995), one exception being the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan.

Scholars then engaged the question of whether or not the presumed causal link between democratic dyads and war was spurious and traceable to standard predictors of peace, such as the absence of territorial contiguity, high levels of trade between democratic states, the role of hegemonic power in suppressing conflicts, or by other economic or geopolitical factors correlated with democracy (Doyle, 1997; Maoz, 1997; Ray, 1995, 2000; Russett and Starr, 2000; Russett and Oneal, 2001).16 After controlling for these factors, most researchers have concluded that the link between “joint democracy” and peace is not spurious (though there is an important debate about trade, which we discuss in the next section), so that the explanation for peace between democratic dyads must have something to do with the nature of democracy. Although some argue that it goes too far to claim that the absence of war between democracies "comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations" (Levy, in Levy and Thompson, 2010: 124fn.38), no one has identified a stronger empirical regularity, and many make the law-like claim that joint democracy is a sufficient condition for peace (Gleditsch, 1995; Chan, 1997; Russett and Starr, 2000).

The consensus that democracies rarely if ever fight each other is not matched by any agreement as to how to explain this strong empirical regularity. Most scholars agree, however, that a theoretical explanation of the democratic peace must be consistent with other patterns of democratic conflict behavior uncovered by researchers. Most analysts have accepted the monadic hypothesis that democracies are not significantly more peaceful than other kinds of states, though some research challenges this view (Rummel, 1995; Benoit, 1996; Ray, 2000).17 In addition, democracies frequently fight imperial and colonial wars; they are more likely to be the initiators than targets in wars between democracies and autocracies; they occasionally use covert action against each other (James and Mitchell, 1995; Bennett and Stam, 1998; Downes and Lilley, 2010); and democratic-authoritarian dyads are more war-prone than are authoritarian-authoritarian dyads. One implication is the system-level finding that an increase in the number of democracies increases the probability of war in a system with few democracies but decreases the probability of war in a system with many democracies.

An explanation for the democratic peace must also be consistent with evidence that democracies almost never fight on opposing sides in multilateral wars, win a disproportionate number of the wars they fight, suffer fewer casualties in the wars they initiate.
(Reiter and Stam, 2002), and engage in more peaceful processes of conflict resolution when they get into disputes with other democracies (Dixon, 1994). Scholars have debated the monadic proposition of whether states involved in transitions to democracy are more likely to become involved in war than are other states (Snyder, 2000). Most evidence suggests that while democratizing states may be more prone to external conflict in the early stages of transition from authoritarian rule (Mansfield and Snyder, 2005), after that new democracies are no more war-prone than are other states (Ward and Gleditsch, 1998; Russett and Oneal, 2001).

An early explanation of the democratic peace was the "democratic culture and norms" model (Owen, 1997; Russett and Oneal, 2001), which posits that democracies are inherently averse to war because democratic cultures develop norms of bounded political competition and the peaceful resolution of disputes. These norms are extended to relations between democratic states but not to relations with nondemocratic states because democracies fear being exploited.

One problem with the normative model is that democratic states have frequently initiated imperial wars against weaker opponents despite the absence of any threat of being exploited by them, and they have fought highly destructive wars against autocracies that posed minimal security threats. This suggests that democratic states are not always constrained by norms of peaceful conflict resolution. This issue led some constructivists to modify the democratic culture argument by emphasizing the importance of shared identity among like-minded democratic states (Risse-Kappen, 1995). Yet democracies do engage in covert action against each other, and they occasionally use low levels of military force against each other (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999), which is not consistent with the idea of a shared identity of democratic states.

A closely related model of the democratic peace is the "institutional constraints" model, which emphasizes electoral institutions, checks and balances, the dispersion of power, and the role of a free press. These institutions preclude political leaders from taking unilateral military action, ensure an open public debate, and require leaders to secure a broad base of public support before adopting risky policies. Consequently, leaders can resort to military force only in response to serious and immediate threats (Morgan and Campbell, 1991; Russett and Oneal, 2001).

The institutional constraints model has trouble explaining why democracies frequently fight autocracies, why they usually initiate those wars, and why they frequently fight colonial wars. In addition, most versions of the institutional constraints model assume that leaders have more warlike preferences than do their publics. This is not always true, however, and in fact belligerent publics sometimes push their leaders into wars those leaders prefer to avoid (the United States in the Spanish-American War, for example) or prevent leaders from making compromises that might reduce the likelihood of war (as illustrated by both the Israeli public and the Palestinian "street"). In addition, politically insecure leaders often are tempted by the diversionary motivation and resort to military force, which often triggers "rally round the flag" effects that bolster their domestic political support (Levy and Thompson, 2010: 99–104).

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999) provide an alternative institutional explanation of the democratic peace and other observed patterns of democratic conflict behavior. Their "selectorate" model emphasizes political survival as the primary goal of political leaders. It posits that leaders with larger winning coalitions (characteristic of democracies) depend on successful public policies for survival in office, whereas leaders with smaller winning coalitions (authoritarian states) depend on their ability to satisfy their core supporters through the distribution of private goods (an option not available to leaders with larger winning coalitions). This implies that democratic leaders are more sensitive to the outcome of wars than are authoritarian leaders, which is consistent with the finding
that democratic leaders are more likely than their authoritarian counterparts to be removed from office after an unsuccessful war (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995).18

Unlike the democratic norms and institutions models, the selectorate model incorporates strategic interaction between democracies and their adversaries. Because of the political benefits of successful wars and the political costs of unsuccessful wars, democratic leaders tend to initiate only those wars they are confident of winning and, once in war, to devote enormous resources to the war effort. Autocratic leaders devote fewer resources to war because the costs of military defeat are less and because they need those resources to distribute to their key supporters at home.

In a war between democracies, both sides would invest an enormous amount of resources, resulting in a war that is economically costly to both sides. Democratic leaders understand this and have strong incentives to seek a negotiated peace rather than to fight, which explains the dyadic democratic peace. The model also accounts for other empirical regularities regarding democratic war behavior. Democratic leaders benefit from successful wars, especially those involving low casualties, and therefore they do not hesitate to initiate wars against weaker autocracies or colonies. The model also explains why strong democracies sometimes initiate low levels of force against a much weaker democracy (there are few domestic political risks), why the target capitulates immediately (they anticipate that leaders in the more powerful state have strong incentives to win the war), and thus why militarized disputes between democracies do not escalate to war.

In conflicts between democratic and autocratic states, there are two conflicting tendencies. It is costly for an autocracy to fight a democracy because democratic leaders have strong domestic incentives to invest heavily in the war effort. On the other hand, autocrats also take greater gambles in war because the outcome of war has less of an impact on their political survival. As a result, the selectorate model predicts that autocracies will initiate wars against weak democracies but rarely against strong democracies. The outcome of disputes between democratic—authoritarian dyads of roughly equal strength depends on the specific values of key variables in the model.

The selectorate model is a major contribution to the literature on the democratic peace as well as to international and comparative politics more generally. One concern, however, is that in its focus on the provision of public goods through good policies in states with large winning coalitions, and in defining those goods primarily in material terms, the selectorate model underestimates the importance of symbolic goods. These include “rally” effects following the diversionary use of force, where the population is mobilized around the regime as a symbol of the nation. Diversionary behavior is common in both democracies and autocracies (Gelpi, 1997), though the relative frequency and political impact has yet to be determined.

Schultz (2001) provides another institutional explanation for the democratic peace, in the form of an information-based signaling model of the interaction of governments, domestic political oppositions, and the adversary. Schultz assumes that democratic institutions and a free press make democracies far more transparent than autocracies, that the primary interest of governments and oppositions is maintaining or gaining political power (as opposed to advancing the national interest), and that the opposition has access to the same information as the government. Governments have incentives to bluff about their intent to follow through on a threat against the adversary, but oppositions do not. Consequently, the opposition’s behavior sends a credible signal to the adversary about the government’s likely resolve in a crisis. This reduces the dangers of crisis escalation due to misperceptions.

Schultz’s (2001) game-theoretic model begins with the government initiating a dispute by making a demand of the adversary.
If the opposition fails to support the government’s threat—either because it believes that the government lacks the capabilities to implement its threat or that a war is likely to be unpopular—the government cannot stand firm in a crisis. The adversary understands this and adopts a harder line in crisis bargaining. Democratic leaders anticipate their adversary’s heightened resolve and refrain from initiating the dispute in the first place.

If leaders expect the support of the opposition, however, they will initiate the dispute, knowing they will be able to stand firm if the adversary resists, and the anticipation of this leads the adversary to behave more cautiously. As a result, crises involving democratic states are less likely to be characterized by misperceptions regarding the adversary’s resolve and less likely to escalate to war because of misperceptions than are crises involving nondemocratic states. This is critical given the link between misperceptions, private information, and the outbreak of war. In jointly democratic dyads, misperceptions are reduced even further, though whether this reduction is enough to account for the near absence of wars between democracies has not yet been established.

Schultz’s (2001) informational model of crisis behavior of democratic states has been very influential, but it is based on rather strong assumptions. One is that the opposition is equally informed as the government about the nature of the crisis and the military capabilities of each side. The US government’s distortion of information about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in 2002–2003 (Rovner, 2011: chap. 7) is just one of countless cases that violate that assumption. If there are information asymmetries between government and opposition, and if the adversary understands this, the opposition’s behavior does not necessarily send credible signals of the government’s relative military strength and resolve.

The informational model also ignores the strategic implications of diversionary theory. If political leaders sometimes have incentives to go to war to bolster their domestic political support, it follows that oppositions may have incentives to try to oppose war, and particularly a war expected to be successful, in an attempt to block a war that would benefit the leader at the expense of the opposition. As a result, the opposition’s lack of support for the government in a crisis does not necessarily signal the government’s lack of resolve, and Schultz’s signaling model breaks down (Levy and Mabe, 2004).

This line of argument assumes that the opposition has the political resources to block war under certain conditions, which is likely to vary across political systems. It also assumes that the political benefits of military victory are lasting, validating the opposition’s fear of the political consequences of a military victory. Although Schultz (2001) is correct that “rally” effects are often temporary, governments can use their increased power from rally effects to implement long-lasting institutional changes. As James Madison (in Hunt, 1906:174) argued, “War is … the true nurse of executive aggrandizement.”

Another explanation for the democratic peace emphasizes the shared interests among democratic states, rather than the inherent nature of democracy itself (Gartzke, 2000). This focus on issues is particularly interesting given the fact that for decades conflict theorists gave relatively little attention to the issues over which states fight, and focused instead on the issue of power, both internationally and domestically (Vasquez, 1998). That has gradually begun to change, and scholars have begun to generate datasets on issues and explored the escalatory potential of different issues (Mitchell and Prins, 1999; Hensel, 2001). The most significant finding here is that disputes over territory are far more likely to escalate to crises and war than are disputes over other issues (Huth, 1996; Vasquez and Hnehan, 2011). This led Gibler (2012) to argue that peace between democracies is a “territorial peace”: undisputed and stable borders between states promotes both democratic development and peace within the
dyad, whereas territorial disputes create fears of conflict and the centralization of political power to deal with the perceived external threat. This is an intriguing argument, but it has yet to be subject to critical scrutiny and comparative testing.

A more developed line of argument is that the shared interests that minimize conflict between democracies are economic, generated by market economies shared disproportionately by democratic dyads. This has led to several variants of a “capitalist peace” explanation for the near absence of wars between democracies. These arguments are the culmination of centuries of theorizing and over a decade of systematic empirical research on the relationship between economic interdependence and peace, to which we now turn.

**Economic interdependence and peace**

The idea that trade and other forms of economic interdependence promote peace was a central theme in nineteenth-century liberal economic theory. It superseded the mercantilist or economic nationalist ideology that prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mercantilism emphasized the mutually reinforcing nature of commerce and war: commerce enhanced the economic foundations of military power, and military power was useful in acquiring territory, resources, and colonies that contributed to wealth (Viner, 1948). Liberals rejected mercantilists’ zero-sum conception of international relations and their preferences for national economic monopolies and protectionist trade policies. Liberals argued that trade based on specialization and comparative advantage could improve the well-being of all states; that the efficiency of trade over conquest in enhancing wealth had increased as production and wealth became more mobile and less tied to territory (Rosecrance, 1986; Brooks, 2005); and that as a result of industrialization, war between major states could no longer be cost-effective. Angell’s (1912) argument that the economic costs of a great power war would be so devastating that such a war was unthinkable was soon discredited by the experience of the two world wars, but it was resurrected by mid-century as a cornerstone of American liberal internationalist ideology. Economic liberalism (or “commercial pacifism” [Doyle, 1997]) is now the basis for optimistic forecasts about the beneficial effects of globalization on international security.

Liberal theorists advance a number of interrelated theoretical arguments in support of the proposition that trade promotes peace. The most influential is the “opportunity cost” or “trade-disruption” hypothesis: trade generates economic benefits for both parties, and the anticipation that war will disrupt trade and lead to a loss or reduction of the gains from trade deters political leaders from taking actions that are likely to lead to war (Polachek, 1980; Russett and Oneal, 2001). The higher the levels of trade between two states, the greater the economic deterrent effects of a bilateral war.

These dyadic-level effects are reinforced by domestic factors. Domestic actors that benefit from trade have incentives to use their influence to support policies that promote a peaceful international environment in which trade can thrive (Rogowski, 1989; Lobell, 2004; Narizny, 2007; Snyder, 1991). The converse is also true: domestic actors that benefit from war, or at least from the threat of war, have incentives (and enhanced power) to use their influence to promote policies likely to lead to war. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, war was profitable for many merchants, and this generated additional political support for war (Howard, 1976; Wilson, 1978).

Others argue that trade increases prosperity, and that prosperity often generates a culture of acquisitiveness that dampens the martial spirit and diverts resources away from the military sector (Veblen, [1915]1966; Schumpeter, [1919]1951; Aron, 1958). A common nineteenth-century argument was
that "Men were too busy growing rich to have time for war" (Blainey, 1988: 10). Prosperity also mitigates the domestic problems that sometimes lead to war, either through external scapegoating by elites to solidify their domestic political support, or through pressures for protectionism that can lead to countermeasures, increase hostilities, and trigger conflict spirals. As Wilson (1978: 150) argues, "economic depression [is] particularly favorable to war hysteria." Others counter that prosperity also increases the size of war chests and thus increases the ability of states to wage war (Blainey, 1988).

From a sociological perspective, some scholars argue that trade increases contact, communication, familiarity, and understanding, which in turn reduce the hostilities and misperceptions that contribute to war (Deutsch et al., 1957).

The commercial liberal hypothesis suffers from a number of analytic problems. One is that its hypothesized causal mechanism is monadic and hence logically incapable of explaining war/peace as a dyadic outcome of strategic interaction between states. Although it is possible that both parties in a dispute among trading partners will refrain from belligerent actions in order to preserve the benefits of trade, it is also possible that one side might try to exploit the adversary's fear of war by standing firm or escalating its coercive threats. In the absence of additional information about expectations regarding the economic benefits of trade, the impact of war on trade, and each side's risk orientation and domestic sensitivity to those costs, the net impact of economic interdependence on peace within a dyad is theoretically indeterminate (Morrow, 2003: 90).

This limitation of standard trade-promotes-peace arguments led rational choice theorists to posit another mechanism through which economic interdependence contributes to peace, one based on a "signaling game" model. The higher the level of economic interdependence, the greater the range of options that states have to demonstrate their resolve in a dispute while minimizing the risk of escalation. Threats to reduce trade or financial ties can signal a state's willingness to stand firm on an issue at less cost and risk of escalation than threats of the use of force (Morrow, 2003). Because economic sanctions are costly to the initiator as well as to the target, only states that are highly resolved will be willing to incur those costs, and consequently economic sanctions send a "costly signal" of a state's resolve in a dispute. The adversary understands this logic, resulting in a reduction in uncertainty about adversary intentions and consequently a reduction in the likelihood of a war by miscalculation.

Strategies of coercion rather than cooperation with the trading partner are more likely if one side believes that it is more resolute than the other, whether because of differing risk orientations or perhaps different sensitivities to the domestic economic and political costs of a halt in trade. It is also more likely if economic interdependence is asymmetrical rather than symmetrical (Hirschman, [1945] 1980; Barbieri, 2002). The least dependent state may be tempted to resort to economic coercion to exploit the adversary's vulnerabilities and influence its behavior relating to security as well as economic issues. The potential for exploitation of the weak by the strong in a situation of asymmetrical interdependence is the basis of the argument, advanced by both realists and Marxist-Leninists, that interdependence, and particularly asymmetrical interdependence, increases rather than decreases the probability of militarized conflict. Just as crisis bargaining theorists have begun to incorporate the risk orientations and domestic cost sensitivity of political leaders into their models, analysts of the relationship between interdependence and peace must do the same.

Another basis for the realist argument that trade can increase rather than decrease the likelihood of militarized conflict involves relative gains concerns. Realists argue that political leaders are less influenced by the possibility of gains from trade in an absolute sense than by the fear that the adversary will
gain more from trade and convert those gains into further gains, political influence, and military power (Grieco, 1990; Gowa, 1994). Realists are not always clear, however, about the precise causal mechanisms leading from relative gains to war. To the extent that relative rather than absolute gains are important, they should have a greater impact on decisions to engage in trade (particularly with adversaries) than on the likelihood of conflict once trade is under way, because if states are already trading with each other they have presumably already partially discounted relative gains concerns.

Still, if diplomatic relations between trading partners begin to deteriorate, relative gains concerns may lead states to cut back on trade, which may exacerbate existing tensions and contribute to a conflict spiral. In addition, trading partners can simultaneously be engaged in a commercial rivalry with each other. Under certain conditions, economic rivalries may escalate to strategic rivalries and war, with domestic politics playing an important role in the process (Young and Levy, 2010). Illustrative cases include the Anglo-Dutch rivalry of the seventeenth century, the Anglo-Spanish rivalry of the eighteenth century, and the Anglo-German rivalry of the late nineteenth century.

Not all realists argue that trade significantly increases the likelihood of war. Some concede that trade and other forms of economic interdependence might have pacifying effects, but argue that these effects are negligible relative to the effects of military and diplomatic considerations (Buzan, 1984). Other scholars acknowledge that periods of trade might be peaceful, but argue that the causal arrow often points in the opposite direction: peace that creates the conditions under which trade flourishes (Blainey, 1988). The more general argument is that politics determines trade, or that “trade follows the flag,” rather than trade shaping politics (Pollins, 1989; Gowa, 1994). The true relationship is probably reciprocal. This suggests that studies of the trade-promotes-peace hypothesis need to consider possible endogeneity effects and explore the simultaneous impact of trade on conflict and conflict on trade.

It is also possible that the inference that trade promotes peace is spurious, because the conditions that facilitate trade simultaneously promote peace. States with common interests tend to trade with each other, and they are also less inclined to fight each other. Trade also creates additional mutual interests, and it is these common interests, rather than economic interdependence per se, that minimizes the incidence of militarized conflicts between trading partners (Morrow et al., 1998; Gartzke, 2007).

Although many of the arguments in support of the trade-promotes-peace proposition are quite plausible, the same can be said of many of the counterarguments regarding the conflict-inducing effects of trade. Whether the deterrent effects of the gains from trade or the conflict-inhibiting effects of signaling mechanisms outweigh the potentially destabilizing effects of economic asymmetries and economic competitions, whether the latter escalate to trade wars and militarized conflicts, and whether the magnitude of these economic effects is outweighed by strategic considerations – these are ultimately empirical questions.

Most of the evidence so far suggests that on average trade reduces the probability of militarized conflict between trading partners (Russett and Oneal, 2001), though the pacifying effects of trade have a greater impact on the frequency of militarized interstate disputes than on the frequency of war (Barbieri, 2002). There are enough questions about the sensitivity of the relationship to different operationalizations of interdependence and of conflict, about proper model specification in light of endogeneity concerns, and about the relevance of some prominent historical cases that appear to run counter to the trade-promotes-peace hypothesis that the current evidence should be treated as provisional. Further research needs to focus as much on the conditions under which trade promotes peace as on the aggregate relationship between trade and peace.
Although most theoretical and empirical studies of the relationship between economic interdependence and peace have focused on trade, a growing number of scholars now argue that other elements of capitalism are have a greater impact than trade in reducing violence between states. Most of these scholars emphasize the role of free markets. Their models incorporate factors such as financial markets, the coordination of monetary policy, economic development, and the mobility of production (Hegre, 2000; Weede, 2005; Crescenzi, 2005; Brooks, 2005). Kirshner (2007) argues that bankers are consistently opposed to war and exert a restraining influence. Gartzke (2007), looking at the period from 1950 to 1992 and using indicators of economic development, free markets, and the globalization of capital, finds no wars between capitalist states. He concludes that capitalism, not democracy, explains the near absence of wars between democracies over time.

McDonald (2009) argues that governments with access to large amounts of public property are more likely to engage in military conflict (both as initiators and as targets) than governments that rule in more privatized economies. Access to public property generates fiscal autonomy, which decouples the domestic political survival of leaders from foreign policy performance, including the risks of an aggressive foreign policy. Fiscal autonomy also enables governments to engage in arms races, which increases a state’s power relative to adversaries but at the same time creates incentives for adversaries to launch preventive attacks. Privatized economies are more conducive to peace.

Mousseau (2000, 2009) accepts the link between free markets and peace, but emphasizes the importance of the social and political foundations of free market economies. He distinguishes between contrast-intensive and contract-poor economies; develops the link between the enforcement of contracts, market cultures, and the maintenance of peace; and finds few cases of wars or militarized disputes between contract-intensive economies. He concludes that his social democratic model can explain both the emergence of democracy and the near absence of war between democracies, and that the causal impact of democratic institutions is minimal.

In summary, although most international relations scholars have concluded that democratic states rarely if ever go to war with each other, they disagree as to whether this law-like pattern can be explained by democratic institutions and cultures, capitalist institutions, stable territorial borders, or other factors. This is a lively debate that shows no signs of an early resolution.

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Most applications of psychological theories of human behavior to international conflict focus on key individuals in authoritative decision-making roles; on their belief systems, personalities, emotional states; and on the psychological processes through which they acquire information, form judgments, and make decisions. It is assumed that political socialization, personality, education, formative experiences, and a range of other factors lead to variations among political leaders along these dimensions, and that these variations produce variations in decision makers’ conceptions of the national interest, the identity and nature of adversaries, the time frame within which goals and threats are evaluated, the trade-offs they make among conflicting interests, the strategies they consider and select for advancing those interests, and other important elements of their decision-making calculus. As a result, different political leaders in the same situation will often make different decisions, and these differences are often significant enough to have a causal impact on the probability of war. The implication of many psychological explanations is that if the leader had been different, the outcome would have been different. It is often argued, for example,
that if Al Gore had been president, the United States would not have invaded Iraq in 2003.\textsuperscript{25}

Another implication of psychological models is that perceptions, judgments, and decisions often deviate from an idealized "rational" model of behavior, as defined by Bayesian updating of information and by decisions based on expected utility calculations. These deviations are driven by the biases in information processing and judgment that have been found to characterize most human behavior (Jervis, 1976; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky, 1982). Political leaders, like most individuals, try to behave rationally, but their limited cognitive capacity in conjunction with an overload of information and conflicting goals leads to suboptimal, "boundedly rational" behavior (Simon, 1947).

These considerations have led a number of scholars to develop psychological explanations for foreign policy behavior, particularly security policy. The most important efforts have occurred in the last four decades, when social scientific approaches began to replace earlier psychoanalytic theories, which were seen as having limited value because of their failure to generate testable propositions. George (1969) developed the concept of an "operational code," a systematic classification of the belief systems of political leaders that provided a basis for comparison across individuals. The operational code concept has generated an ongoing research tradition involving both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Walker, 2003). Another contribution was Jervis' (1976) seminal study of perceptions and misperceptions, which included an influential analysis of how decision makers learn from history. These early studies focused primarily on cognitive rather than motivational sources of flawed judgment and decision making, reflecting the ongoing "cognitive revolution" in decision making in psychology (Larson, 1985: ch. 1). More recent work, building on some earlier efforts (Janis and Mann, 1977) and on subsequent work in neuroscience, has begun to emphasize the role of emotions and motivated reasoning (McDermott, 2004, 2009; Rosen, 2005; Stein in this volume, chap. 8).

These psychological models have been applied to a number of different questions bearing on war and peace. There is substantial evidence that crisis decision making, defined in terms of short time for decision and high threat to basic values, differs from more routine decision making in a number of ways at the individual, small group, and bureaucratic organizational levels (Holsti, 1989). There are numerous studies of the impact of cognitive and motivated biases on threat perception and intelligence failure (Jervis, Lebow, and Stein, 1985; Jervis, 2010), though the best of these studies emphasize the interaction of psychology with politics.

Another important line of research involves applications of prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) to security policy. The theory assumes that value is defined in terms of a subjectively defined reference point, that people overweight losses relative to comparable gains, and that they are risk averse in choices among gains (from the reference point) and risk averse in choices among losses. They also tend to underweight probabilities relative to utilities but to overweight small-probability outcomes. Among the many implications flowing from these assumptions are that actors take more risks to maintain interests, reputations, and domestic political support than to enhance them; domestic publics punish leaders more for incurring losses than for failing to make gains; deterring adversaries from making gains is easier than deterring them from recovering losses or compelling them to accept losses; and actors are slow to accept losses and consequently are driven by sunk costs (Levy, 1997; McDermott, 2004).

Many of these psychological explanations are easier to apply to decision making in individual wars than to generalize about all wars, and easier to validate in the experimental lab than in the empirical world.
One implication, however, is that attempts to construct a general theory of war are limited by the role of individual-level variables that are often difficult to predict and to operationalize across cases.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not easy to characterize the state of the art with respect to the study of interstate war and peace, in part because of the many dimensions by which we might evaluate the extent of cumulation of knowledge. Some pessimists will emphasize the absence of consensus about what the causes of war are, what theoretical and methodological approaches are most useful for identifying and validating those causes, what criteria are appropriate for evaluating competing theories, and whether it is possible to generalize about anything as complex and context dependent as war. They will also emphasize the paucity of law-like propositions in the field and our limited predictive capacities regarding the outbreak of war, as reflected in the argument that “war is in the error term” (Gartzke, 1999).

But there is a more positive view. Although we lack a extensive set of empirical laws and a unified theory to explain them, in the last two decades or so scholars have empirically validated a limited number of law-like generalizations that provide an irreducible core that theories cannot violate: democracies (and capitalist states) rarely if ever fight each other; a disproportionate number of wars are fought between contiguous states and over territorial disputes (but most neighbors do not fight, and most territorial disputes do not lead to war); dyads with highly asymmetric power capabilities tend to be peaceful; and a disproportionate number of wars are fought between strategic rivals.

It is also true that over the last two decades, conflict researchers have become more rigorous in their theorizing and much more sophisticated in their use of both statistical and qualitative methods. Formal models have become more sophisticated owing to the development of new equilibrium concepts and the capacity to handle incomplete information. The old (pre-1980s) separation between statistical and formal methods has been overcome, and most formal models of war and peace are either tested with statistical methods or illustrated with in-depth case studies. In addition, the gap between the assumptions of formal models and the statistical models used to test them has significantly narrowed. Case study research is more strongly guided by theory and by research designs constructed to rule out threats to valid causal inference. The study of war and peace is increasingly characterized by multi-method research, particularly the combination of formal, statistical, and case study approaches, whether in individual projects or larger research tradition, and there is also a growing interest in experimental approaches (Mintz et al., 1997).

A good example of the benefits of multi-method research is the democratic peace research program, where large-N statistical methods, small-N case study methods, and formal modeling have each made a distinctive contribution to the cumulation of knowledge about the security policies and strategic interaction of democratic states. Quantitative methods were indispensable in establishing the empirical regularity that propelled the research program, demonstrating that the extraordinarily strong association between joint democracy and peace was not spurious, and identifying other empirical regularities that constrain any theoretical explanation of the democratic peace. Qualitative case studies were indispensable for exploring potentially anomalous cases, helping to resolve debates about whether states did or did not satisfy the definitional requirements for democracy, and assessing whether the inference of a causal connection between joint democracy and peace was valid or spurious in that particular case. Formal modeling helped in exploring possible causal paths.
leading from joint democracy to peace, incorporating a theory of strategic interaction as well as the domestic sources of foreign policy, and in the process generating some very plausible theoretical explanations of the democratic peace and associated empirical regularities. The synergistic effects of each of these different methodological approaches have contributed enormously to our understanding of the democratic peace.

Scholars have also been more willing to think critically about the meta-theoretical assumptions underlying theoretical and empirical research. A social science orientation is more entrenched than ever in the field, but the conception of social science and the definition of the “mainstream” has broadened to include a wide range of empirically-oriented constructivist approaches. Debates between realists and liberals have been superseded by debates between rationalists and constructivists, and the norms of the field increasingly require case study researchers to test their arguments against an alternative constructivist explanation as well as against alternative realist and domestic politics explanations. At the same time, the gap between realist and constructivist approaches has begun to narrow (Johnston, 1995; Barkin, 2010). We have begun to see more engagement between positivists and non-positivists (Lebow and Lichbach, 2007), and, significantly, more debates among positivists (broadly defined) about the logic of inference, the meaning of causality, the proper relationship between theory and evidence, and the criteria for evaluating scientific progress (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994; George and Bennett, 2005; Elman and Elman, 2003).

Another indicator of progress, in the eyes of many, is that conflict theorists continue to move away from the belief that a single moncausal theory can adequately explain the causes of interstate war. They have also abandoned single-level theories, accepted the idea that a complete explanation for war must incorporate variables from several levels of analysis, and recognized that the causal weight of variables from a given level may vary depending on both the value of variables from other levels and on the particular stages in the temporal sequence leading to war. Individual-level variables, for example, probably have greater impact on decisions for war between rivals than on the origins of the rivalry.

This shift toward the recognition of multilevel causation and the importance of interaction effects and sequencing has combined with other trends to lead conflict analysts to begin to examine more complex forms of causal relationships in the processes leading to war. They have begun to incorporate causal chains into their explanations and to examine the possible role of necessary or sufficient conditions in the processes leading to war (Goertz and Levy, 2007). They have also begun to explore the utility of the concept of multiple paths to war (Vasquez and Henehan, 2010: 134–145; Levy, 2012), though they have yet to develop its methodological implications. For one thing, multiple causal paths might be better captured by INUS conceptions of causation (Mackie, 1965) — in which a factor is an insufficient but necessary element in a causal path that is unnecessary but sufficient for the outcome — than by standard conceptions of causality associated with linear regression models. Ragan’s (1987) conception of multiple conjunctural causation incorporates INUS conditions and reflects multiple causal pathways. In conflict analysis, Vasquez’s (2009) steps to war model explicitly posits one path to war (involving territorial disputes, rivalry, alliances, and arms races) but acknowledges other possible paths to war. The bargaining model of war can be interpreted as positing three analytically distinct paths to war for rational unitary actors.

Despite these many positive developments, it remains true that students of war lack the predictive power of physicists. That, however, is not the appropriate reference point by which to evaluate our knowledge of the social world. Bernstein et al. (2000) are right that “God gave physics the easy problems.” Clausewitz ([1832]1976) “fog of war”
envelopes the analyst as well as the battlefield. Given the enormous complexity of strategic decisions for war and the informational constraints on analysts as well as on decision-makers, one can argue that we have made enormous progress in the last three or four decades in trying to understand who fights whom, when, where, and why.

NOTES

1 On definitions of war see Bull (1977: 184), Vasquez (2009: 21–30), and Levy and Thompson (2010: 5–11). Peace is traditionally defined as the absence of war (or perhaps of militarized disputes), though some have begun to distinguish between peace and stable peace, or between cold peace and warm peace (Miller, 2007).

2 Great power wars have been declining in frequency steadily for the last half millennium, with the exception of the nineteenth century, to the point that the last six decades constitute the longest period without a great power war for five centuries (Wright, 1942:1965; Väyrynen, 2006). Meanwhile, the frequency of civil wars increased in the 1960s, peaked in the late 1980s, and declined somewhat erratically since then (Gleditsch, 2008). Some identify a general decline of political violence across a wide range of dimensions (Pinker, 2011). On longer trends, spanning millennia, see Gat (2006) and Levy and Thompson (2011).

3 The changing nature of war since World War II has led to the development of new data sets on war and other forms of militarized conflict (Pettersson and Thennier, 2010; Hewitt, Wilkenfeld, and Gurr, 2012). Singer and Small’s (1972) Correlates of War data has been broadened and updated (Sarkees and Wayman, 2010). See also the Oxford Programme on the Changing Character of War (http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/ccw/) and the Human Security Report 2009/2010.

4 To mention a few differences: a disproportionate number of modern history’s interstate wars have been fought by the most powerful states (Wright, 1965), whereas a disproportionate number of contemporary civil wars involve weak states or failed states (Hironoka, 2005); warring populations are politically separated after interstate wars but generally not after civil wars, which has a profound impact on bargaining over peace settlements (Licklider, 1995); and decision-making approaches have been applied far more to the study of interstate wars than to the study of civil wars. On the other hand, the concept of the security dilemma and the bargaining model of war have been applied to both interstate war and to civil war.

5 The termination of war is closely linked to questions regarding the relationship between war and conditions for state-building, democratization, and durable peace settlements, and for international peacekeeping in the process (Licklider, 1995; Fortna, 2004, 2008; Werner and Yuen, 2005; Toft, 2010).

6 On theories of just war, see Walzer (1977).

7 Feminists have made important contributions to numerous aspects of war, but they generally give relatively little attention to the central question of explaining variations in war and peace over time and space. See Eshleman (1987), Tickner (2001), Sylvester (2010), and Sjoberg (2012).

8 For general reviews of the political science literature on the causes of war, see Doyle (1997), Bennett and Stam (2004), Vasquez (2009), and Levy and Thompson (2010). For anthropological and sociological approaches, see Haas (1990) and Malešević (2010), respectively.

9 Anarchy is defined as the absence of a legitimate government authority to regulate disputes and enforce agreements between states or other actors. The Importance of anarchy is de-emphasized by hegemonic realists like Gilpin (1981), and the state-centric assumption is relaxed by those applying the ethnic security dilemma to interstate communal conflicts (Posen, 1993; Snyder and Jervis, 1999). Evolutionary theorists argue that power and wealth are proximate aims in the competition for scarce resources and reproductive opportunities needed for survival (Thayer, 2004; Gat, 2006: 667–68).

10 Most inadvertent wars begin with a calculated decision for war at the end of an inadvertent process, and possibly with a "preemptive strike" motivated primarily by the fear that the adversary is about to attack and by the belief that if war is inevitable it is best initiate it and gain first-mover advantages. Although preemption is theoretically quite plausible, Reiter (1993) argues that such wars rarely happen.

11 For an evaluation of power transition theory, see Dicillo and Levy (1999).

12 Schroeder (1994) argues that a rule-based balance of power system developed at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, driven by an ideational transformation among European political leaders.

13 The well-supported finding that war is associated with an equality rather than a preponderance of power at the dyadic level (the "power preponderance" hypothesis) (Kugler and Lemke, 1996) does not logically imply that a preponderance of power is stabilizing at the system level, where alliances play a role (Leeds, 2003).

14 Scholars have made considerable progress in advancing our understanding of the effects of
international law and institutions on cooperation between states, particularly on economic, environmental, and human rights issues (Keohane, 1984; see also chapters by Martin [13], Simmons [14], and Mitchell [32] in this volume). They have also applied institutionalist and constructivist approaches to collective security systems (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1991; Schroeder, 1994), regional security communities (Deutsch et al., 1957; Adler and Barnett, 1998), alliances (Haas, Keohane, and Wallander, 1999), and national security policies (Katzenstein, 1996), and they have debated the general impact of international institutions on war and peace (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Keohane and Martin, 1995). Still, there have been relatively few systematic empirical tests of these hypotheses (but see Russel and Oneal, 2001), and theories of institutions and war lag behind those of the democratic peace and capitalist peace.

15 Criteria for war include a military conflict involving at least 1,000 battle deaths. Criteria for democracy generally include regular and fair elections with unrestricted participation of opposition parties, voting franchise for a substantial proportion of citizens, at least one peaceful and constitutional transition of power, and a parliament that shares powers with the executive.

16 Some claim that the causal relationship is reversed, with peace creating the conditions under which democracy can flourish (Rasler and Thompson, 2005).

17 The differences are only modest, however, and this is unlikely to change with future research. Consequently, any explanation for the democratic peace that implies that democracies are significantly more peaceful than other states will probably not be viable.

18 The selectorate model focuses on the probability of removal from office and neglects its costs and risks, which can be much worse in personal terms for authoritarian leaders (Goemans, 2000).

19 On the issues Correlates of War (ICOW) project (Paul Hensel and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell), see http://www.paulhensel.com/icow.html

20 Hegemonic stability theorists argue that one of the primary conditions facilitating trade is the existence of a liberal economic hegemon able and willing to maintain a stable political economy, and they strongly imply that liberal economic hegemony also promotes peace (Gilpin, 1981; Keohane, 1984; Brawley, 1993).

21 On the anomaly of World War I, where levels of interdependence were quite high, see Copeland (1996), Ripsman and Blanchard (1996/97), and Papayoanou (1999).

22 North, Wallis, and Weingast (2009) make a similar distinction between "open access" orders and "natural" orders.

23 For a survey of applications of political psychology to foreign policy, see Tetlock (1998), McDermott (2004), Stein in this volume (chap. 8), and the relevant essays in Huddy, Sears, and Levy (forthcoming).


25 For criteria for evaluating counterfactual arguments, see Levy (2008b).

26 This modifies Schelling’s (1966) argument that deterrence is easier than compliance.

27 Other examples include research on economic interdependence and peace and on the diversionary theory of war.

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