

THEORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

POLSGR8832, Columbia University, Spring 2025

Jack S. Levy
 jsl2169@columbia.edu
 jacklevy@polisci.rutgers.edu *
<https://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/>

Fridays, 10:10am – 12:00 noon
 Office Hours: after class &
 by appointment

"War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death;
 the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied."

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

The recent wars in Ukraine and the Middle East do not necessarily confirm the saying that “only the dead have seen the end of war,” but it does suggest that analyses and forecasts of the continuing decline of international war are probably premature. In this seminar we undertake a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature on interstate war, focusing primarily on the causes of war and the conditions of peace but giving some attention to the spread, conduct, and termination of war. We emphasize research in political science but include some coverage of work in other disciplines. We examine the leading theories, their key causal variables, the causal paths or mechanisms through which those variables lead to war or to peace, the conditions under which they are most likely to do so, and the degree of empirical support for various theories. We look at a variety of methodological approaches: qualitative, quantitative, formal, and experimental. Our primary focus is on the logical coherence and analytic limitations of theories and the kinds of research designs that might be useful in testing them.

The seminar is designed primarily for Ph.D. students or aspiring Ph.D. students who want to understand – and ultimately contribute to – the theoretical and empirical literature in political science on war, peace, and security. Students with different interests and those from other subfields and disciplines can also benefit from the seminar and contribute to it in important ways. Members of the seminar should have some familiarity with theories of international relations and (ideally) some exposure to principles of research design and to statistical, experimental, and/or game theoretic methods. I have tried to organize the course in a way that will be useful for students with different academic backgrounds and career objectives. I have tried to combine breadth of coverage of the “mainstream” scholarship in the field with flexibility for students to advance their own programs of study. To this end I have coupled a common set of readings for all participants in the seminar with considerable freedom for individual students to select topics for their paper for the class. The required readings are rather extensive, though no more extensive than for most Ph.D. seminars.

The question of war and peace is a broad one, as one might expect for a topic that has engaged thinkers and scholars from many disciplines since the times of Sun Tzu, Thucydides, and Kautilya. Some narrowing of focus is necessary for any one-semester course, and I want to be explicit about which topics and approaches we will and will not emphasize. Our primary concern, following most of the social science literature on the topic, is to explain variations in war and peace over time and space. Are wars more likely to occur under some conditions than other conditions, at some times rather than other

times, between some states rather than other states, under the direction of some types of leaders rather than other types of leaders? Under what conditions are wars likely to escalate or expand, and when are they likely to end? As the late Stuart Bremer asked, “Who Fights Whom, Where, When, and Why?”

The seminar focuses primarily on interstate war. True, the most common forms of international conflict in recent decades have involved civil war, insurgency, counterinsurgency, terrorism, and various forms of communal violence, while wars between states have continued to decline in frequency. But the “return of great power competition” and the intensity of many regional conflicts remind us of the increasing potential for interstate wars. The potential consequences of these wars – for human security, for the economy, and for the evolution of the international system – alone make them worthy of study. In addition, many important theoretical debates in the IR field are closely linked the origins and escalation of interstate war, so that a familiarity with this literature is quite valuable for those wishing to engage the IR field as a whole. Finally, at the practical level, Columbia has numerous scholars with expertise in terrorism, civil war, and other forms of intrastate conflict (Professors Biddle, Daly, Fortna, and Mitts, among others). A division of labor based on comparative advantage is beneficial.

In our treatment of interstate war, we will not give much attention to military strategy or the conduct of war, except to the extent that these considerations influence the outbreak, escalation, or termination of war. Following most of the mainstream literature, we also focus more on the causes of war than on the termination or consequences of war, though in recent years scholars have devoted more attention to war termination and to the impact of war on the political, economic, and social structures of state and society. Finally, we spend relatively little time on the normative and policy implications of our theories. This is not to say that these other subjects are any less important than those covered in this seminar. In a one-semester course, however, it is necessary to make some choices for the sake of coherence and depth of coverage. Finally, the prevailing norms of the International Relations field (and hence incentives for Ph.D. students planning to go on the U.S. academic job market) give priority to the construction and testing of theoretical propositions over policy prescription and analysis.

This syllabus includes a far more extensive list of topics and sources than we will actually cover in the class. It serves as an analytically-organized bibliography of the field, though admittedly an incomplete and perhaps somewhat idiosyncratic one. It has evolved over many years, and I spend a lot of time updating, reorganizing, and revising it for each new course. I hope it is useful, both now in this course and perhaps later on. If you find any typos or duplications, or have suggestions for additions, deletions, or reorganization, I would be eager to hear from you. For additional coverage of topics related to the domestic sources of foreign policy, see my Foreign Policy Analysis syllabus at <https://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/> .

READING:

The required reading for the class includes one book and a substantial number of articles and chapters. The book,

Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, *Causes of War* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010),

is available for purchase at Book Culture (536 W. 112 St; 212/865-1588) and also online. I have asked Columbia Library to place the required book on reserve.

I have put pdf's of all required article-length pieces on the CourseWorks website for the class (<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/>), organized by week. In addition, I have posted chap. 1 of the Levy-Thompson book on Courseworks for our first day of class, for those who have not yet been able to acquire the book or who are uncertain about their interest in the seminar.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

We will organize our weekly meetings as follows. I will usually begin with my own introductory comments on the readings, with the aim of putting them in the context of existing literature. We will then move to an open but guided discussion of the material. Most weeks we will cover several distinct topics. We will focus primarily on the logical coherence of theoretical arguments, the appropriateness of particular research designs and methods for testing them, and implications for other conflict theories. We bring up historical examples bearing on various theories, but our aim is to use these examples as vehicles for illustrating theories and their limitations, not to engage in extensive debate about the best explanations of particular historical events (however interesting that might be). I will try to circulate a small set of questions in advance each week to help guide your reading and provide a sense of some topics to prioritize for discussion, though the best questions are often those raised by members of the seminar.

Our class discussions will be most useful, collectively and individually, if each student completes all of the required reading prior to each class meeting, comes to class prepared to discuss the reading, and actively participates in the discussion. Such discussions will also make the course more enjoyable. Contributions to class discussion are an important component of a student's grade for the course. Although the primary component of the grade is a paper on a subject of your choice relating to war or peace or to international conflict more generally, significant contributions to class discussion are usually a necessary condition for an A grade.

Grading

Grades for the course will be based on the following weighting:

Contributions to class discussion,	25%	
Paper	75%	(due Monday, May 12, noon)

The Paper

Given that some students' primary scholarly interests focus on forms of war or international conflict other than the interstate war focus of our weekly meetings, and given my hope of making the seminar useful to students with a wide range of interests, I will allow papers on any topic relating to international conflict broadly defined (civil war, insurgency, terrorism, etc.). All papers, however, should be informed by our readings for the class where those readings are relevant. I also recognize that students are at different stages of their graduate programs, so I will accept anything from a literature review to a research design or a research paper.

If you are a first year Ph.D. student, or perhaps someone outside of the IR field, a literature review paper might be appropriate and useful. If you are further along and have an idea for a research paper but are just getting started on it, maybe a research design would be best, outlining your question and how you plan to answer it. If you are a more advanced student and have started to do research on a particular topic, then a research paper makes more sense. The type of paper is up to you, but whatever you do must go significantly beyond what you have done before on a similar paper in other classes. I may ask to see prior written work you have done relating to your paper topic.

I am happy to discuss your ideas for paper topics – in person or by email. In either case, I want an email confirmation of the topic you wish to pursue. I will probably ask for a longer written statement of your question and how you plan to go about analyzing it. For literature reviews, this might involve a preliminary outline and provisional bibliography at some point. For research designs or research papers, I will ask for a paragraph topic statement, and then for research papers a 2-4 page research design. This is to make sure we are on the same page and to provide feedback along the way. I will not formally grade these intermediary products, but doing them well will help me provide better feedback and ultimately affect the quality of your final paper. I would like each student to begin a preliminary discussion of a paper topic with me no later than February 21, the end of the fifth week of class.

Style: All papers should be single space with a space between paragraphs, with footnotes rather than endnotes, with your name and page numbers on the paper, and submitted to me on the Assignments tab on CourseWorks. Any citation style is acceptable, as long as you are consistent. However, even if you use a traditional footnote style – as detailed in *Chicago Manual of Style* and adopted by *International Security*, *Security Studies*, and some other journals – please include a separate bibliography at the end of the paper (even though that style does not formally require a cumulative bibliography). Personally, I find the parenthetical, in-text citation style (author, date, page) the easiest to use in my initial drafts, but that is entirely up to you. Whatever style you use, any citations of quotations or specific pieces of evidence must include a specific page or page range, so that the reader can easily follow up. I recognize that there are some online, media, or blog sources that do not have page numbers.

The due date for papers is Monday, May 12, noon, ten days after our last scheduled class. This is the latest date I can be reasonably confident of completing my grading for this class and for my Rutgers seminar. Please submit the paper via the Assignment tab on the CourseWorks site for the class.

Literature reviews should be 11-15 pages. This should be a critical review of the literature on a well-defined theoretical question or set of interrelated questions relating to international conflict. Good paper topics often coincide with a section or subsection of the course, but sometimes span several topics. For example, a broader topic might be balance of power theory or power transition theory, while narrower topics might be preventive war, territory and war, or the nuclear taboo. In order to avoid misunderstandings, please secure my approval for your paper topic in advance.

The syllabus includes extensive bibliographies in the hope that they serve as useful guides, or at least points of departure, for many possible paper topics. I encourage you to utilize additional sources. This will be absolutely necessary on topics where my lists of sources is rather limited. Please do not assume that by reading all of the items in a particular section of the syllabus you have adequately covered a particular topic for your review. On topics where my list of sources is much longer, you may need to

narrow the list considerably, while hopefully adding a few additional sources. For topics with lengthy bibliographies on the syllabus, feel free to consult with me about prioritizing among them. Please do not assume that the order of items on the syllabus reflects their relative importance.

In your literature review you should summarize the literature on your topic and at the same time organize it in some coherent way – preferably around a useful typology or theoretical themes, not around a succession of books and articles. You should note the theoretical questions that this literature attempts to answer, identify the key concepts and causal arguments, note some of the empirical research that bears on these theoretical propositions, and relate it to the broader literature on war and peace. You should identify the logical inconsistencies, broader analytical limitations, and unanswered questions of the leading scholarship in this area. You should also suggest fruitful areas for subsequent research. If you have any thoughts on how particular hypotheses could be tested, please elaborate on that.

After I know the likely paper topics for the class, I will post copies of a few sample literature reviews from previous courses, to give you a few examples of what good papers look like. See CourseWorks Files folder #00. Those papers will also give you a sense of how many sources are appropriate. That depends in part on whether your sources are primarily books or articles, but the equivalent of fifteen articles is often a good guide for a lower limit. How you organize your review and the substance of your arguments are more important than the length of your bibliography.

Research designs should identify the question you are trying to answer, ground it in the relevant theoretical literature, specify your key hypotheses and their underlying causal logic, and provide a detailed statement as to how you would carry out the research. This includes the specification of the dependent and independent variables and the form of the relationship between them, the operationalization of the variables, the identification (and theoretical justification) of the empirical domain of the study (i.e., case selection), the identification of alternative explanations for the phenomenon in question, and an acknowledgment of what kinds of evidence would confirm your hypotheses and what kinds of evidence would disconfirm or falsify your hypotheses. Try to do this in 12-15 pages (single space). Please consult with me along the way, starting with a one page statement early in the term. I am hoping for research designs that are roughly equivalent to rough drafts of dissertation proposals or grant proposals (which, admittedly, vary in length).

Research papers include research designs and the implementation. For the purposes of this class, the research need not necessarily be complete. For example, if your design calls for both a statistical and case study component, it is okay to complete only one component for the class. There is no set length for the paper. However, if you are aiming at an article-length paper that will ultimately be submitted to a journal, note that most journals have word limits ranging from 12-15,000 words (with most at the lower end), including footnotes and references but not including any technical appendices. (I think that works out to 23-27 pages, single space, though journals always require double space.) The paper for this class need not be that long.

Academic Integrity (Columbia statement)

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own.

This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

For a complete GSAS statement on academic integrity, see <https://gsas.nyu.edu/about-gsas/policies-and-procedures/gsas-statement-on-academic-integrity.html>

Artificial Intelligence

You need permission from the instructor to use ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence programs to prepare and/or write your paper for the class. If you want to use AI, please contact the professor and explain how you want to use what kind of AI and for what purpose.

Disability Accommodations (Columbia statement)

In order to ensure their rights to reasonable accommodations, it is the responsibility of students to report any learning-related disabilities, to do so in a timely fashion, and to do so through the Office of Disability Services. Students who have documented conditions and are determined by DS to need individualized services will be provided a DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter.' It is students' responsibility to provide this letter to all their instructors and in so doing request the stated accommodations.

If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter,' please contact the professor to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and disability@columbia.edu. For more information, please visit <http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities>.

OUTLINE

1. COURSE INTRODUCTION
 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF WAR
 What is War?
 Typologies of War
 The Concept of Total War
 Clausewitz
 Is Clausewitz Still Relevant?
 The Use of Force: Conceptual Distinctions

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS
 Levels-of-Analysis Framework
 Individual Level: Biological and Evolutionary Approaches
 What Is a Cause?

 REALIST THEORIES OF WAR, I
 Varieties of Realist Theories
 Neorealist Theories of War
 Geopolitics

3. REALIST THEORIES OF WAR, II
 Offensive Realism
 Defensive Realism
 The Security Dilemma and the Spiral Model
 The Offensive/Defensive Balance
 Neoclassical Realism
 Definition and Measurement of Military Power
 Datasets
 Technology and the Diffusion of Military Power
 Military Effectiveness
 Realist Theory and Great Power Cooperation

 ISSUES: WHAT DO STATES FIGHT ABOUT?
 General Treatments
 The Issues Correlates of War Project (ICOW)
 Other Datasets on Issues
 Territory and War
 Datasets
 Borders and Walls

4. BALANCE OF POWER THEORIES

Classical Balance of Power Theories

Conceptual Ambiguities

Historians' Perspectives

Balancing

Balancing vs. Bandwagoning

“Soft Balancing”

Whom Do States Balance Against? Land Powers and Sea Powers

What Do States Balance Against? Disaggregating Power

Regional Balancing

Balancing (or not) in Non-Western Systems

Concerts and Collective Security

Polarity and War

Quantitative Studies of Polarity/Systemic Capability Concentration and War

The Dyadic Power Parity Hypothesis

Asymmetric Wars

Alliances: Formation and Strategies

Alliance Formation

Formal Models of Alliances

Alliance Strategies

Domestic Sources of Alliances

Reliability and Reassurance

Alliance Data

Do Alliances Deter or Provoke War?

Wartime Military Coalitions

Lateral Pressure Theory

5. POWER SHIFTS AND HEGEMONIC THEORIES

Power Transition Theory – The Organski et al Research Program

Gilpin's Hegemonic Transition Theory

Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China

Other Historical Cases

Preventive War

Historical Applications

The Status Quo/Revisionist Distinction

Rising and Declining Powers

Systemic Leadership and Long Cycle Theory (Thompson, Rasler, Modelski)

Theories of General/Hegemonic/Systemic/World War

Other Theories of Hierarchy, Transition, and War

Theories of Unipolar Politics and Hegemony

David Kang's Research Program on Hierarchy in Asia

RIVALRIES AND ARMS RACES

International Rivalries

- Overview
- The Diehl and Goertz Research Program
- The Thompson/Rasler/Colaresi Research Program
- Strategic Triangles and Rivalry
- Rivalry Duration and Termination
- Other Approaches to Rivalry

Arms Races and War

- Historical Studies
- Quantitative and Formal Approaches
- Arms Control
- The Steps-to-War Model

6. BARGAINING AND WAR

Rational Choice Theories: Introduction

- Prisoner's Dilemma Models
- The Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma Game and the Evolution of Cooperation
- Reciprocity
- Early Work on Bargaining
- The Bargaining Model of War
- The Commitment Problem
- Informational Problems
- Issue Indivisibility
- Third Parties, Domestic and Foreign
- Other Formal Models of Bargaining
- Spatial Models
- Behavioral Perspectives on the Bargaining Model of War

7. SIGNALING, REPUTATION, RESOLVE, AND STATUS

Signaling: Classic Works

- Signaling: Extensions
- Cheap Talk
- Audience Costs
- Historical Applications
- Reputation and Signaling: Formal Models
- Reputation: Empirical, Experimental, and Conceptual Studies
- Reputation and Resolve
- The Psychological Dimension
- The Domestic Dimension
- Domestic Political Oppositions and Signaling (Schultz)
- Politically-Motivated Opposition to War

8. THE DEMOCRATIC PEACE
 - Societal-Level Theories of War: Overviews
 - General Theoretical Treatments of the Democratic Peace
 - Kantian Foundations
 - Measurement and Datasets
 - (More) Quantitative Empirical Studies
 - Monadic Level
 - System level
 - Experimental Approaches
 - Critiques
 - Constructivist Approaches
 - Selectorate Theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al)
 - The Territorial Peace
 - Why Do Democracies Win Wars?
 - Other Implications of the Democratic Peace
 - Democratization and War
 - Presidential and Parliamentary Democracies

9. ECONOMIC THEORIES OF WAR AND PEACE
 - General Treatments
 - Marxist-Leninist Theories
 - Critiques and Alternative Theories of Imperialism
 - Resources and War
 - Trade-Promotes-Peace Theory
 - Copeland's Dynamic Realist Theory
 - Quantitative-Empirical Studies
 - The Globalization of Production
 - The Capitalist Peace
 - Industrialization and Modernity
 - The Contractual Peace
 - Trading with the Enemy, and the Impact of Conflict on Trade
 - The Militarization of Commercial Rivalries
 - World War I: An Anomaly in Economic Liberalism?
 - Finance and War
 - Historical Perspectives
 - The First World War
 - Sectoral Interests and Coalitional Politics
 - The Military-Industrial Complex
 - Economic Costs of Conflict

10. SOCIETAL-LEVEL THEORIES, II

The Diversionary Theory of War

Social Identity Theory

Debates over Mechanisms

Quantitative-Empirical Studies

Formal Theoretical Approaches

Historical Case Studies

Leaders, Political Survival, and War

Leader Turnover

Data

Public Opinion and War

Hawks and Doves

Casualties and Public Support for War

The Media

Autocracies, War, and Peace

Datasets

Nationalism and War

Revolution and War

Gender and War

Other Domestic Frameworks and Studies

IDEATIONAL AND CULTURAL APPROACHES

Constructivist Approaches – General

Ideas, Ideology, and War

Culture, Identity, and War

Historical Memory

Status and War

Race, International Relations, and War

Historical Applications

Religion and War

Datasets

Historical Perspectives

The “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington)

Attitudes toward War

Rhetoric, Justification, and Legitimacy

Norms and War

General

The Territorial Integrity Norm

Taboos

The Law of War and Its Impact

Basic Texts

11. **DECISION-MAKING: THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, I:
BELIEFS AND INFORMATION PROCESSING**
Do Leaders Matter?
Introduction: Political Psychology and International Relations
Backgrounds and Characteristics of Leaders
Beliefs and Images
 Images of the Enemy
 Empathy
Misperception and the Causes of War
Psychology of Threat Perception
 Metaphors
Emotions, Interests, and Motivated Reasoning
 Fear, Anger, and Hatred
 Morality and Fairness
 Interpersonal Relationships and Face-to-Face Diplomacy
 Neurobiological Approaches
Trust

12. **DECISION-MAKING – THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, II**
Prospect Theory Goes to War
 Other Approaches to Risk and Uncertainty
Time Horizons
Analogical Reasoning and Learning from History
Gender Differences in Decision-Making
Other Psychological Models of Conflict
Personality
 Psychoanalytic Approaches

DECISION-MAKING – THE ORGANIZATIONAL & GOVERNMENTAL LEVELS

- Bureaucratic Politics and Organizational Processes
 The Allison Models
 Applications to the Causes of War
 Alternative Models of Bureaucracies and War
Leaders and Advisors
Strategic Culture
The Small Group Level of Decision-Making
Crisis Decision-making
 Definitions of Crisis
 The Impact of Stress
Civil-Military Relations
 Comparative Perspectives
Militarism
Intelligence Failure
 Historical Cases
Military Doctrine and Military Innovation
The President and Congress: War Powers

13. CRISIS ESCALATION AND THE NUCLEAR ERA

CRISIS ESCALATION AND EXPANSION

General Studies of Crisis Escalation

Models of Entrapment

Inadvertent War

 Accidental War

 Crisis (Mis)management

Preemption

The Expansion (Spread) of War

 The First World War

The Duration of War

 Implications of the Bargaining Model

 Psychological Perspectives and Debates

War Termination

THE NUCLEAR ERA

Debate over the “Nuclear Revolution”

Empirical Studies of the Impact of Nuclear Weapons

 Qualitative

 The “Long Peace”

 Quantitative

Nuclear Weapons and Crisis Bargaining

Escalation in the Nuclear Age

The Nuclear Taboo

Public Opinion and Nuclear Weapons

U.S. Nuclear Strategy

Command and Control

Preventive Logic in the Nuclear Age

Early Thinking about Nuclear Weapons and Strategy

APPENDICES

- A-1 DATA SETS ON INTERSTATE CONFLICT/WAR
 - Since 1945
 - Since 1815
 - Since 1500 (and before)
 - Dispute Datasets
 - Militarized Interstate Disputes (COW)
 - Other event-base conflict datasets

- A-2 IS WAR DECLINING?

- A-3 CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE

- A-4 DETERRENCE AND BARGAINING
 - Classical Deterrence: Models and Critiques
 - The Huth-Russett Research Program on Deterrence
 - The Lebow/Stein Research Program on Deterrence
 - Further Debates over Rational Deterrence Theory
 - Deterrence and Selection Effects
 - Alexander George's Research Program on Force and Statecraft
 - The Behavioral Correlates of War Research Program on Crisis Bargaining
 - International Crisis Behavior Project (ICB)
 - Other Studies of Coercion and Bargaining

- A-5 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND SECURITY REGIMES
 - Concerts, Collective Security, and Security Regimes
 - Paul W. Schroeder's Research Program
 - Regional Security Systems
 - Other Studies of International Institutions and Security
 - Data on International Organizations

- A-6 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- A-7 PEACEKEEPING

- A-8 THE STUDY OF PEACE

- A-9 FEMINIST THEORIES OF PEACE AND WAR

- A-10 ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY, MIGRATION, & INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT
 - Environmental Change, Scarcity, and Conflict
 - Climate Change and Interstate Conflict
 - Water and War
 - Demography, Security, and Conflict
 - Refugees and Conflict

A-11 SECURITY ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

A-12 THEORIES OF JUST WAR

Theological Perspectives

Just War in the Nuclear and Information Age

Anticipatory Self-Defense

A-13 WAR AND STATE-MAKING

The “Military Revolution” and the Rise of the State

From Anthropology

A-14 STRATEGY AND GRAND STRATEGY

A-15 HISTORY OF WARFARE

A-16 REVIEWS, CAUSES OF INTERSTATE WAR (POLITICAL SCIENCE)

Encyclopedias

A-17 INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

General Treatments

Philosophy

Primatology and Evolutionary Theory

Anthropology

Archaeology

Sociology

Economics

Geography

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING LIST

main number refers to week of the term (at least through week 7 in spring 2025);

letter indicates multiple topics each week;

* indicates required reading; the other reading is included for those doing papers on the topic and for future reference;

for each week I recommend that you read in the order the items are listed here, not in the alphabetical order on Courseworks.

1. **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF WAR** (January 24)

focus, aims, organization, requirements, expectations, questions, etc.

required reading (*) in sections 1 a, b, c, d

1a. **What is War?**

- * John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Chap. 1.
- * Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, *Causes of War*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Chap. 1.
- * Meredith Reid Sarkees, "Defining and Categorizing Wars." In Sarkees and Frank Whelon Wayman, *Resort to War, 1816-2007*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010, chap. 2.
- Raymond C. Kelly, *Warless Societies and the Origin of War*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000. Pp. 1-10.
- Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, 2nd ed., rev. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. Pp. 8-13.
- Bronislaw Malinowski, "An Anthropological Analysis of War." *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941): 521-50.
- Julian Lider, *On the Nature of War*. Westmead, UK: Saxon House, 1977. Chap. 2 and pp. 269-72.
- Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Chap. 1-2.
- Hidemi Suganami, "Explaining War: Some Critical Observations." *International Relations*, 16, 3 (Dec 2002): 307-326.

1b. **Typologies of War**

- * John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Chap. 2, pp. 67-77 only.
- John A. Vasquez and Brandon Valeriano, "Classification of Interstate Wars." *Journal of Politics* 72, 2 (April 2010): 292-309.

The Concept of Total War

Hew Strachan, "On Total War and Modern War." *International History Review* 22, 2 (June 2000), 341-70.

Talbot Imlay, "Total War." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30, 3 (2007), 547-570.

Roger Chickering, "Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept." In Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering, and Stig Förster, eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute, 1999. Pp. 13-28.

1c. Clausewitz

- * Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Book I, chap. 1. (best edition of Clausewitz)
- Peter Paret, "Clausewitz." In Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Pp. 186-213.
- Michael Howard, *Clausewitz*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983.
- Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz*, trans. by Christine Booker and Norman Stone. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986.
- Michael I. Handel, *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*. London: Cass, 1986.
- Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*. London: Pimlico, 2002.
- Hew Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War: A Biography*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007.
- Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle: The Political Theory of War*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz & Contemporary War*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Thomas Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.
- "Clausewitz Special Section," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, 6-7 (2014).
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4. BALANCE OF POWER THEORIES (February 14)
Required readings in sections 4 a, b, e, g, h

4a. Classical Balance of Power Theories

- * Randall L. Schweller, "The Balance of Power in World Politics." In William R. Thompson, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*, 4 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Vol. 1, pp. 143-57.
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4b. Balancing

Balancing vs. Bandwagoning

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Regional Balancing (outside of core of great power system)

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- Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 129-138, 161-76.
- John Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System." *International Security* 10, 4 (Spring 1986), pp. 105-110 only.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001.
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- D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam, *The Behavioral Origins of War*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.
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4e. **The Dyadic Power Parity Hypothesis**

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- See also week 5 on power transition theory.

4f. **Asymmetric Wars**

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- T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
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- Michael P. Fischerkeller, "David versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars." *Security Studies*, 7, 4 (Summer 1998), 1-43.
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4g. **Alliances: Formation and Strategies**

Alliance Formation

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- * Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and John A. Vasquez, "What Do We Know about War?" In Mitchell and Vasquez, eds., *What Do We Know about War?* 3rd ed. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021. Pp. 319-42. (on alliances, territorial disputes, rivalries, and other topics)
- * Paul Poast, *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in Military-Pact Negotiations*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. Introduction & Chap. 1.
- Stephen M. Walt, *Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987.
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- Thomas S. Wilkins, "'Alignment,' not 'Alliance' the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment." *Review of International Studies*, 38, 1 (2012): 53-76.
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- Matthew Digiuseppe and Paul Poast, "Arms versus Democratic Allies." *British Journal of International Politics* 48, 4 (October 2018), 981-1003.
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- +++ see also discussion of balancing vs. bandwagoning

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8. THE DEMOCRATIC PEACE (March 28)

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DECISION-MAKING – THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL LEVELS (March 25, cont.)

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13. CRISIS ESCALATION AND THE NUCLEAR ERA (May 2)

Required readings in sections 13 c, e, h, k, l, m

CRISIS ESCALATION AND EXPANSION

13a. General Studies of Crisis Escalation

Thomas C. Schelling, "The Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack." In Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960. Chap. 9.

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Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981. Chap. 3-4.

Richard Smoke, *War: Controlling Escalation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977. Chap. 1.

Patrick James, "What Do We Know About Crisis, Escalation and War? A Visual Assessment of the International Crisis Behavior Project." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 36 (2019): 3-19.

Austin M. Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War." *International Organization* 70, 1 (Winter 2016), 103-31.

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Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Quagmires in the Periphery: Foreign Wars and Escalating Commitment in International Conflict." *Security Studies* 7,3 (Spring 1998): 94-144.

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13c. Inadvertent War

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- Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960. Chap. 7-8.
- Bruce M. Russett, "Cause, Surprise, and No Escape." *Journal of Politics* 24, 1 (February 1962): 3-22.
- Phil Williams, "Maintaining Control Over Events." In Williams, *Crisis Management*. New York: Wiley, 1976. Chap. 6.
- Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
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Accidental War

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- Marc Trachtenberg, "The 'Accidental War' Question." Unpublished paper, 2000. <https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/inadvertent.pdf>
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- +++ see later section on Command and Control

Crisis (Mis)Management

- * Alexander L. George, ed., *Avoiding Inadvertent War: Problems of Crisis Management*. Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1991. Chap. 3-4 (pp. 13-27).
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- Steven Benedict Dyson and Paul 't Hart, "Crisis Management." In Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy, *Handbook of Political Psychology*, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

13d. Preemption

- Recall distinction between preemptive and preventive strikes (week 5)
- Thomas C. Schelling, "The Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack." In Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960. Chap. 9.

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13e. The Expansion (Spread) of War

- * John A. Vasquez, *Contagion and War: Lessons from the First World War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chap. 1.
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APPENDICES

A-1 DATA SETS ON INTERSTATE CONFLICT/WAR

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