

WARS IN CIVILIZED SOCIETIES

Wars in civilised societies became ever more lethal and complex. A variety of specialties has looked at wars from different perspectives.

Historical Perspectives of War

A historical perspective, taught till recently in schools, has depicted kings and their wars as glorious markers in the progress of civilisation.

Some have classified wars. Revolutions, uprisings, wars of independence, and civil wars were internal wars. External wars occurred between states and had different features: conquests such as by Alexander the Great and Napoleon; invasions by barbarians such as the Goths and Vandals; religious wars such as the Crusades and the 30 Years War; colonial wars, such as between Britain and India, and the Anglo-Zulu wars.

Military history has examined tactics used to wage wars: from chariots in the early empires to infantry and phalanx in Roman times, followed by cavalry in the times of the knights, then archery, muskets, artillery, fortifications and sieges, trench warfare, machine guns, tanks, blitzkriegs, nuclear weapons.

Another specialty has involved customs and rituals of fighting: contests between champions, mutual agreement on battlefield, prohibition of use of feathers on arrows (decreasing their accuracy), preservation of prisoners, not harming non-combatants, etc.

The legal approach has attempted to define just and unjust wars, lawfulness and lawlessness of acts of war, and more recently definitions of atrocities, violations of human rights, terrorism, and genocide.

Though biographies of kings and generals have been plentiful, history has acknowledged the ordinary soldier only recently. Keegan in *The Face of Battle* (1976) described their motivations in different periods of history. At the battle of Agincourt in 1415 ordinary soldiers were mostly serfs and peasants and their motivations were loot and taking prisoners for ransom- their only hopes of improving their stations. In 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, soldiers' main motivations were danger of surrender, loyalty to officers, and a sense of honour. In the battle of Somme in 1916, line after line of men rose from their trenches to be machine-gunned down. Their motivation was a sense of mission, patriotism, credulity, obedience, group conformity, and inevitability. World War Two studies indicated that soldiers fought for love – initially their family, king, and country. In combat they were motivated by love of their comrades and their leader.

The recent discipline of traumatology was spawned to a large degree by wars, though recognition of trauma and grief in war goes back a long way. They were described already in the Epic of Gilgamesh and in Homer's Iliad.

In modern history grief and trauma were called nostalgia in the American Civil War. In the First World War they were called shell shock and cardiac neuroses. In that war mental breakdown in huge numbers was recognised for the first time. The first World War also spawned for the first time stories such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque and *Memories of an Infantry Officer* by Siegfried Sassoon that depicted not glory, but the devastation and pointlessness of war.

War trauma was repressed, then rediscovered in The Second World War where it was called combat exhaustion, and was repressed and rediscovered again after The

Vietnam War, this time called post-traumatic stress disorder- PTSD. That is still the mainstream diagnosis in traumatology.

In summary, the history of wars has been viewed from many different angles. Each view accepted the ubiquity of war. In recent history traumatology has depicted the dire physical, psychological, social, and moral consequences of war. It has initiated treatment for these consequences. However, the best treatment is prevention, and this requires understanding the causes of war.

Historical Approaches to the Causes of War

As with history of war, the causes of war have also been approached from different perspectives.

The ubiquity of war led to theories that war was part of human nature. The 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes maintained that the natural state of man was all fighting all. Similarly, Freud and the ethologist Lorenz saw war a result of innate aggressive instincts. Later psychoanalysts added greed, envy, and jealousy to innate aggression, and noted that aggressive feelings could be projected onto and into others, triggering their own aggressiveness.

Other philosophers also assumed war to be natural and inevitable, but did not share Hobbes's and Freud's moral despair. Carl von Clausewitz, a 19th century Prussian general turned philosopher saw war as a logical extension of diplomacy, whose goal was to exercise the virtues of will and dominion. The philosopher Hegel even believed that war was good for the moral health of a nation.

Some recent theories have acknowledged the ubiquity of war, but saw reasons for this situation. They emphasised social factors as causes of war. Conservative views blamed war on the breakdown of hierarchies, law and order, and balance of power. Liberal views countered that balance of power was no guarantee of peace, but could lead to repeated wars such as occurred between Russia and Turkey, and prolonged wars such as the 100 Years War. Balance of terror nearly led to nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union. Liberal views held that it was unjust hierarchies that provoked internal unrest, and made leaders embark on external wars as ways of maintaining their local power.

Liberal views of unjust hierarchies merged with those of radical philosophers who saw economic inequality as cause of wars. Marx maintained that wars were part of historical evolution and would end only when the proletariat finally wrested power.

Offshoots of the liberal-radical theorists blamed the greed of capitalism, and the military-industrial complex and arms manufacturers as causes of war. Others, however, pointed out that wars harmed trade and payments for arms could be lost as a result of war.

Many social theorists still see gross lack of resources, and/or inequalities in their distribution (especially if the inequalities were widening between social, ethnic, or religious groups) as causes of war.

Quincy Wright in *A Study of War* (1965) saw wars caused by complex reasons that included breakdowns of biological-psychological-cultural, socio-political, technological, and legal equilibria. It is obvious that a coherent theory of the history and the causes of war is required.

A Wholist Approach to Causes of War

A wholist approach to the causes of war was proposed by Valent. Wholist included biological, psychological, and social survival factors, as well as a three-dimensional view that includes morality, justice, values, religion, ideology, existential meanings, and their symbols. Application of this framework to war among animals and early societies, and wars for symbols are dealt with under separate entries.

This section examines three agonistic (aggressive) survival strategies that humans share with animals, which in civilised societies have potential to radiate into wars. The three agonistic survival strategies are hunting/obtaining resources (otherwise called assertiveness or goal achievement), competition/struggle, and defence/fight.

Civilised Societies

The human brain experienced an unprecedented evolutionary explosion in the last half a million years. On top of that, in the last 10,000 years since the start of civilisation, the human mind and society have undergone an exponential mental and social explosion. And yet survival strategies, including the agonistic ones, hold great sway in civilised societies to the current day, even if their radiations and symbolisations are not immediately obvious.

For simplicity in what follows, there will be an emphasis on Western civilisation. However, parallel developments have occurred in other civilisations as well.

Radiation of Hunting and Obtaining Resources in Civilised Societies

At the start of civilisation development of agriculture and domestication of animals had three effects. First, there could for the first time be surplus and storage of food. Second, such storage became targets of raids by marauding groups when hunting conditions were poor. Third, the newly civilized settlers replaced hunting and gathering with labour.

Labour was required to work the land, to build irrigation and dwellings, and to build walls to protect stores, animals, and women against raiders. Settlers themselves raided neighbouring lands. Their raids still resembled hunts, but settlers' hunts extended to conquests of land and capture of slaves.

The Old Testament (e.g., *Numbers XXXI, 9-40*) describes variable degrees of raiding, looting, conquest, killing, and enslavement.

Raids and conquests have recurred throughout history. Similar to early raiders, Hun, Goth, Turkish, and Norse "barbarians" raided the rich empires. A well known such invasion was the sacking of Rome by the Vandals. On the other hand, the settled Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Mongolian, and Chinese empires grew wealthy from conquest, loot, tributes, and labour of conquered people.

Loot and wealth were important motivations for the Crusades, even if the fourth Crusade resulted in the sacking of Constantinople, not Jerusalem. Spanish conquistadors of the 16th century robbed the indigenous South American population, especially of gold. English pirates in turn robbed the Spanish boats that returned with their loot. The next two centuries saw prominence of the slave trade. This was followed by a new wave of conquests of land and labour through colonization.

The Second World War still manifested typical features of territorial conquest, looting, killing, and slave labour. Slavery occurs even today, and includes trafficking of women and child slavery.

Radiation of Competition/Struggle in Civilized Societies

Destructive derivatives of competition can be seen in hierarchical struggles within states that can result in internal wars, and contests between states that can result in inter-state wars.

Intrastate competition and struggle.

In spite of great technological developments, advantages of high status have remained the same as in earlier times: first access to resources (which now could be inordinate wealth), favourable shelter (which was now palaces), access to women (king Solomon, like Shaka, had a thousand wives), respect (even in the 20th century the Japanese emperor and Prince Sihanouk were perceived as semi-divine), and power (which could be absolute).

Physical contests for alpha male positions gave way to more subtle but violent struggles. They included assassinations, such as of Alexander the Great's father Phillip and Julius Caesar, and to palace revolutions such as a spate of them in Russia in the 1700's. Some palace conflicts extended into civil wars, as in the War of the Roses (1455-1485). Coups d'état and putsches still occur, especially in unstable third world countries.

Hierarchical struggles also occur between rulers and the ruled, especially when rulers oppress, exploit, and enslave their own people beyond endurance and minimal justice, and when conflict offers some hope of improvement.

Revolutions have occurred since ancient times, such as the Assyrian peasant revolution, reflected much later in the European peasant revolutions in the 16th century. Kings such as Charles I in England and Louis XVI in France who manifested extremes of despotism and greed were executed in the English Revolution (1649) and in the French Revolution (1789) respectively. Revolutions against the ruling classes swept Europe in 1848 and Russia in its 1917 Revolution. Revolution against the Shah of Iran in 1979 and against the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986, and the Arab Spring currently are more recent examples. Unfortunately history has shown that the revolutionaries could be as dictatorial once in power as their forebears.

Inter-state competition and struggle

Inter-state wars have often served personal intrastate needs of kings. According to Herodotus (*Histories*, Book3, 134), Darius's wife Atossa had said to Darius, "[Thou] should[st] perform some noble achievement to prove to the Persians that it is a man who governs them." Darius consequently made war with the Greeks. Machiavelli too advised the prince to establish renown and prestige through war (*The Prince*, Chapter 21).

From Homeric Greece to medieval Europe it was accepted that semi-divine kings had the right to make wars. Their absolute power within their countries allowed them to give rein to their ambitions and rivalries. When rivals and their allies approximated each other in strength prolonged or recurrent wars occurred. An example was the Hundred Years War (1336-1453) between England and France.

Colonialism results from wars between unequals, where a strong nation totally overwhelms a weaker one, exploits its territory and wealth, and treats its inhabitants as serfs and slaves. Colonies have existed since the Assyrian empire to very recent times.

Colonies enriched the ruling classes of the colonizers, and enhanced their prestige and status. The scramble for Africa by European countries in the late 19th century was fuelled by rulers' competitive needs to make a mark as a nation. Tens of millions of indigenous people died in the colonizations of the Americas, Africa, and Australia.

Analogous to revolutions, colonies have waged wars of independence. Babylonia revolted against Assyria in 720 BC, and each subsequent empire has had its rebellions. Examples in modern history are America's rebellion against Britain (1775-1782) and Algeria's against France (1954 to 1962). Unfortunately, as after revolutions, decolonisation without solid social structures and sufficient resources often led to oppressive regimes (such as Uganda under Idi Amin).

Newly independent peoples have also been vulnerable to conflicts over land and resources. Conflicts are still occurring for diamonds in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for oil in Angola and southern Sudan, and for drugs in Colombia and Mexico. Ethnic and religious overlays can be added to resource and territorial quarrels, as have occurred between India and Pakistan, between Arabs and Jews, and in wars in Nigeria and Darfur.

Radiation of Fight/ Defence in Civilised Societies

Every country has a defence force. This implies that every country has visions of potential enemies who could intrude into its territory to kill, rape, and destroy. The propensity to xenophobic fears even in secure civilised societies may be a remnant of a lack for margin of error against predators in human evolutionary history.

Ways of producing a margin of security were either total elimination of enemies which was difficult, or incorporating them politically. The Greeks, the Romans, and Alexander the Great's Macedonians, for example, conducted "defensive" wars that included defeat and incorporation of neighbouring enemies. Empires, with increasing margins of safety at the centre have been built from such defensive wars. Incorporation and just treatment of former enemies could provide long-term stability as it did in the Roman empire. The European Union currently is also an incorporation of former enemies, and has resulted in peace between its members for over six decades.

Because, as was true in our historical and evolutionary pasts, nothing arouses and coheres a population behind its leader more than fear of attack by enemies, elites have manufactured external threats and wars to prop up and enhance their own power. Bismarck manufactured wars in order to achieve his purpose of unifying Germany. Hitler claimed murder and rape of Germans as reason to attack Poland. In the 1990's the Serbian elite alleged atrocities and compounded them with reincarnations of past oppressors in order to hide a failing economy and to have excuses to attack Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Even when threats and displays of power are meant to be defensive deterrents, it is not surprising that they are seen as preludes to attacks by the other side. Cycles of threats can build up to pre-emptive attacks and full-scale war. Such mutual suspicion and build up resulted in the First World War and the Cold War.

Two further means of ridding enemies should be mentioned. The first is ethnic cleansing, which involves expulsion of enemies. Examples are Armenians being driven

out of Turkey in 1917, Jews out of Germany in the 1930's, Germans out of eastern Europe after World War II, Palestinians out of Kuwait in 1990, and Croats, Bosnians and Kosovars were cleared by Serbs in the 1990s.

Total extermination is the other means of ridding of enemies. Joshua's conquest of Jericho resulted in the massacre of all men, women, children, and animals, and the razing of the city (*Joshua* 6, 21-27). In current times, the term genocide stemmed from the racist Nazi view that all Jews and their genes had to be eliminated. This resulted in the deaths of six million Jews.

We saw that territorial respect could mitigate wars between neighbours. To stop the vicious internecine blood-letting of the 30 Years War, the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 re-established respect for the territorial integrity of states. Unfortunately the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference has given legal status to dictators to do as they liked within their borders while other nations stood by. Thus tens of millions of people were killed in Soviet Russia during the rule of Stalin, as well as in China during Mao's Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, internal genocides have occurred unhindered in Rwanda in 1994 and in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979.

Terrorism as a means of ridding enemies has been recognised since the French Revolution. State terrorism, which is more common but receives less publicity, uses imprisonment, torture, executions, random "disappearances" and lately return of traumatised people into the community. These methods are used to eliminate the state's enemies and to intimidate the population.

Individuals and groups who perceive a need to achieve their aims but do not have state powers may use spectacular terrorist atrocities such as plane hijackings, 9/11 destruction, and suicide bombings, to intimidate and break the morale of powers greater than their own.

Actually it is questionable whether conquests, colonisation, and defensive/offensive wars necessarily provide security and prosperity. In fact world powers are frequently drained of wealth and morale by numerous wars while small states such as Switzerland and the Scandinavian states enjoy peace and prosperity. As with individuals, security and prosperity may depend more on subjective effort than on what can be grabbed or destroyed.

In conclusion, recognition of agonistic survival strategies and their radiations provides a means of making sense of what is otherwise an irrational dropping of the 'mask of civilisation' when people go out to kill each other.

The apparent irrationality of wars is increased further when leaders stir motivations from more than one agonistic survival strategy, and when they use abstract symbols such as religion to enhance these survival strategies.

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See Also: Trauma survival strategies; War- animals and early societies; War for symbols; www.paulvalent.com /Trauma situations/ War e.g., http://www.paulvalent.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/violence_war_02.pdf

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