

An Analysis of War

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There are many reasons why war begins to occur around the world and all throughout our long history. From the time of war between Athens and Sparta to the end of the Cold War, plus future conflicts thereafter into the present, we can start with understanding the concept of war and how it evolves. Sometimes there are no explanations for war, and the theories as to why it even happens vary, but the themes are all universal. Much of the motivation behind it lies in the quest for power by one country not already satisfied with what it has, and that country might feel compelled to find a way to gain more. The defensive mechanism for this can be the fear and paranoia that another country sees when a neighbor starts to build a wall around itself for safety purposes. Therefore, the defensive maneuver by a particular rival can be seen as an offensive threat by the other and might use this excuse to arm itself. Thus, we have some of the key point as to the threat of war.

Realism reveals to us that the threat of war is a result of a natural state that runs within the hearts of many a man, which can be a plausible argument, for as Thucydides has explained, the growth of war is inevitable as Athenian power seemed to grow more and more. Sparta and Athens were ultimate rivals, and the fear of resistance made Sparta all the more paranoid. “What makes war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta” (Thucydides 1972, 49). There were mainly three reasons why Athens felt it necessary to go to war, which were security, prosperity, and prestige. The struggle included the concept of who would have the most power (49).

Athens made many other nations nervous because of its rapid expansion and its alliances, and no one wanted to disturb them. It was a model society that made others covet what it had. There were also many conflicts between oligarchs and democrats. The type of power Athens had was less obvious from the outside. The Athenian Navy engaged a great deal with other countries, especially the surrounding ones, and it was inland to some extent, but also not far from the sea. Athens was not as vulnerable as some other nearby city-states for a period of time, though it still faced formidable challenges from Sparta and eventually the Persian onslaught (Thucydides 1972, 49). Athens also became a considerable hegemon in the region for awhile, though this also gradually came to an end. It was in Athens’ character to utilize the Long Walls to its defensive advantage, which protected the city-state. Pericles, one of its leaders, saw himself as a natural ruler and did not want to be displaced, for he feared this greatly (Thucydides 1972, 49). The decree for war was an economic sanction, and Megara was the target. Athens also built up its Navy over time, which it utilizes to invade Sicily and extend its empire. This was in their national character. They could have prevented war, but this was not prudent, and nothing could protect against the Spartan army anyway (49). If Sicily had not existed, there probably would not have been a war in the first place, or at least Athens would have had less motivation to actively invade the island and go across the sea.

A plausible explanation as to why war broke out in Europe in 1914 was because of many ideas that resulted from nationalism erupting in Austria-Hungary (Lafore, 1997). This was a multiethnic country with Germans, Austrians, Bavarians, and others in the South. The nationalism destabilized because of homogeneous groups, but it was difficult to have homogeneous groups in Southern and Eastern Europe.

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Nationalism became part of the appeal on the right of the political spectrum in Eastern Europe, and this did not necessarily turn out to be such a positive thing. Russia started a Pan-Slavism movement in Europe and encouraged the Slavs in other countries to gain political independence (Lafore, 1997). Before this time, the Ottomans controlled the Balkans, but their power gradually decreased, and nationalism started to erupt there also. The French-Russian alliance did not help make friends with Germany, who had taken Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War (1997). Italy was allied with Germany and was dangerous, and the Italians relied on Austria-Hungary.

The Germans began to have some problems during the war. First, nationalism was on the rise and the Ottomans were held down, while the leader of Serbia also happened to be simply a militia leader more or less. Russia did not like the idea of some other Slavic people giving in without having their national identity recognized, and Russia tried to ask for domination of the straits while continuing to promote Pan-Slavism and independent governments (Lafore, 1997). Serbia began to have national aims that were unhealthy for the rest of Europe because it might have drawn a confrontation with the whole continent. The Franco-Russian alliance also bothered the Germans, who feared a two-front war. Germany would not have the manpower to fight back and could only attempt to push back France. All that was needed now was a trigger to spark the hotbed. This was unfortunately the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914 (1997). He wanted to strengthen the self-government of the Slavic peoples, which apparently a few people did not like, and so he was killed.

Austria gave a list of demands to Serbia, which then Austria declared war on Serbia when that nation refused to comply. The Germans gave their support to the Austrians and helped them fight Serbia. The Russians started to mobilize to get ready for war, and Germany attacked France through Belgium (Lafore, 1997). Germany was now in a European war. Germany, though, started to decline against Russia. Germany made an unwise decision to attack France because Britain was an ally and had a powerful navy; Britain punished Germany. Austria was prone to a division and did not have the full support of Germany, and the Austrians wanted an alternative to the declaration of war by Austria. The Austrians were reluctant to accept a pledge plan, and the Serbian threat was still visible (Lafore, 1997). The Austrians were divided because of the nationalism that was splitting the country, and they had to choose if there were obligations to Serbia or not. Meanwhile, the Germans felt they had to beat France quickly before Russia could cause a problem. The Russians were patient and waited for the ideal opportunity to attack, doing so strategically while waiting until after the Serbs were being attacked (1997). The Russians then made their move.

The British supported Austria in the war, and the Germans knew they were in trouble and were scared. Germany felt it had no alternative but to attack France or Belgium at this time if it were to do anything, and it was "Germany's principle interest to assure the isolation of France" (Lafore 1997, 111). There was no indication that France would not support the Russians, and France would only ask for Alsace-Lorraine for concessions. There exists the possibility that if the war would have been postponed two or three years, that it would have been much less attractive for Germany. If Germany wanted the land it wanted, it would have had to strike early, thereby explaining its need to attack so soon before any other powers could mobilize.

The United States' presence was important because it helped maintain the balance of power and kept one of them, in particular, Germany, from getting out of hand. The Versailles Treaty kept Germany in tow, but it did not allow Germany any concessions or extra privileges (Lafore, 1997). Germany had to learn its lessons before it could start to become a world power again.

The Dawes Plan was the compromise, and it actually succeeded in the 1920s in Germany, with Germany able to pay its war debts (Lafore, 1997). There existed that if one party violated it, the others would protect against it, but unfortunately, Germany was not content with the status quo and started to gain power slowly again (1997). Something obviously went wrong. The main reason for this was the rise of Hitler, who can be considered just another revisionist.

Hitler did not want to force a conclusion in Austria. In describing nationalism in terms of how Hitler used it, Gellner serves this thought:

In fact, however, nationalism has often not been so sweetly reasonable, or so rationally symmetrical. It may be that, as Immanuel Kant believed, partially, the tendency to make exceptions on one's own behalf or one's own case, is *the* central human weakness from which all others flow; and that it infects national sentiment as it does all else, engendering what the Italians under Mussolini called the sacro egoismo of nationalism (Gellner 1994, 281).

He is able to use nationalism through many means to come to power, and one of his concepts was the idea of Lebensraum, which meant living space. He said that Germans needed Russia for more living space. He had a three-stage plan, and part of this came from *Mein Kampf*. One of his means of using his propaganda was to find a scapegoat, and his target was the Jews. After Hitler, who was cautious about what he did, came to power, he started to build arms in Germany, after careful disarmament negotiations with Britain and France. A series of other events also took place over the next few years that allowed Hitler to become even more powerful (Gellner 1994, 281). The Austrian coup was defeated, and in 1935, Hitler violated the Versailles Treaty by forming an alliance with Mussolini, and this was especially volatile because Italy had used poison gas to subdue the Ethiopians (especially the Abyssinians). In the same year, Britain and Germany met, and Germany was able to build up its Navy. In 1936, Germany occupied the Rhineland, and all of these actions taken by Germany proved that the League of Nations was worth little to the common cause of protecting all these regions. In 1937, the Spanish Civil War took place, and though Britain and France did not intervene, it did not look very promising when Italy got involved in that same year. Austria was annexed to Germany in 1938. The fall of 1938 brought the Munich Agreement, which came "unstuck." 1938 brought Czechoslovakia to Germany, and as Germany invaded Poland, this brought the onslaught of war, as the policy of appeasement could do no more (281). Britain believed that passive action and giving in to Germany might have allowed them to make small concessions without having to worry about war, but they were wrong, for Germany's lust for power only continued to grow. Appeasement became possible because no one wanted to get back to war so quickly after what happened in the first one. The British did ask when the Germans were going to stop, but Britain did not realize the consequences until the inevitable happened (281). Anyway, it seemed better for Britain to be on the defensive than the offensive and appear threatening to Germany.

As far as the far was concerned, France did not have as sophisticated of an air force as the Germans, and though the British only had two divisions for land forces in World War II, their answer to the Germans was in Britain's supreme air force. Though Britain might have had an impressive air division, their military forces were not suited to the problems at hand, and the United States had to step in to save the Allies after France was invaded (Gellner 1994, 281). What ultimately destroyed Germany was not just the overreach of the superior military forces of Germany, but Germany's own unquenchable first for land (281). Germany made a mistake when it attempted to chart the unfamiliar territory of Russia, and history dictates that when another country tried to step into Russia on its home territory, that was usually the end of that country's desire to go on, and the Germans were defeated here and fell apart completely.

The United States and the Soviet Union escalated into the Cold War, beginning soon after World War II and ending around the end of the 1980s. The Russians' desire for power and to spread Communism throughout the world began to take effect as they slowly invaded many sections of Eastern Europe and various other countries. Russia also had ambitions to become a world power like the United States and to appear intimidating, and so the Soviets invested in a nuclear arsenal that grew larger until it was enough of a threat to cause the United States, likewise, to build its own (Gaddis 1987, 114). The Soviets' desire for global hegemon status soon manifested into a technology war as well, and they competed with the US from everything like sending a satellite into space to aiming nuclear warheads at major cities throughout the United States. As we began to witness the fall of many Eastern European governments to Soviet power, we developed a paranoia that spread into the Domino Theory, which held claim to the possibility that if one democracy fell, another could fall, or if one country became Communist and it continued to spread, that gradually Communism could ultimately envelop much of the world, including the United States eventually (114). We feared this Communist threat so much that we were willing to take any measures possible to stop its spread, as described thus by Paul Nitze, who was Policy Planning Staff Director under Truman:

To deal with this possibility, Nitze advocated a strengthen of American and West European conventional forces that went well beyond anything Kennan had envisaged: it might even be necessary, he argued, to begin to shift economic priorities away from the production of consumer goods and to resort to a certain amount of “propaganda” to accomplish that objective (Gaddis 1987, 114).

This fear also brought on the Bay of Pigs conflict in Cuba and even lays claim to one of the reasons for the Vietnam War (but this could have been about economic interests as well) (114).

The whole point of all of this buildup of a nuclear arsenal was merely to intimidate in case of a perceived threat. There was always the fear that war could have broken out between these 2 countries, yet it did not. In fact, later on we began to see that merely having the weapons allowed us to influence foreign policy and to help us to find a way to more peacefully negotiate these types of situations to decrease the likelihood of such an event happening. We have discovered that actually having nuclear weapons can make us more aware of what we are capable of and what each country does not want to do to destroy one another (Gaddis 1987, 114). This is why the alliances throughout the world have been formed to protect one another. Because of these Cold War events, we have also understood, over a period of years, that these weapons are far too dangerous to even use, and they have taught us valuable lessons. Many of these countries have in fact, in taking into account the situations in the Cold War, instituted measures to ban most nuclear testing and to stop the production and some distribution of these destructive toys (114). The existence of nuclear weapons has, as a surprising byproduct of the end of the Cold War, brought more stability and less tension in the world, contributing to world peace for an extended period of time overall. Both the United States and the former Soviet Union have been able to become more skilled negotiators instead by preventing wars and international conflicts, but especially the United States, and we are able to apply this knowledge throughout the world (114).

Collective security, arms control, and the balance of power were not able to prevent past major wars from occurring because of certain inevitable factors that fell into place, and certain trends and conditions in these time periods allowed all of these events to occur. No one was willing to try to negotiate anything, and each individual action that Athens took looked to be a threat to Sparta, whether or not it was a defensive maneuver. Sparta had made strides to impress others, the city-state wanted to show that it was powerful and could do as it pleased (Thucydides, 1972). Sparta, like Germany, had a desire for power and a hunger that the Spartans felt needed to be satisfied. If Sparta had not been so greedy or worried about impressing others, maybe the city-state could have prevented itself from getting into such a conflict with Athens. No one was out to enforce any sort of world peace or think of negotiating the conflict, and so it was allowed to escalate. No one told Athens that its growing military forces, but especially its Navy, was making Sparta or any other countries uncomfortable (1972). Sparta was not the one to go over to Athens to explain to them why Sparta felt this way because the Spartans were too obsessed with trying to impress and to gain prestige.

World War I resulted from too much nationalism gone awry. Austria could not solve its problems of nationalism from the Serbs, and Russia could have been partly responsible for instigating so much hostility because of its Pan-Slavic stance (Lafore, 1997). Of course, no one person wanted to take the blame or keep everyone in check after the assassination of Ferdinand, and the countries that had grudges that were already there to begin with now had an excuse to go to war. Everyone now wanted to fight and gets things over with, and none of the European powers came up with a valid conclusion or emphasized a specific reason why Ferdinand was assassinated in the first place (1997). Germany did not consider talking over with France the issue if the Rhineland, and instead, Germany chose to go in anyway and invade France so that they would not have to worry about being attacked at a later time by Russia (1997). Pan-Slavism was felt in Germany also, and nothing else needs to be said to explain what happens when one ethnic people wants to be independent and wants to make it known throughout the rest of the world.

World War II occurred mainly because of the failure of the League of Nations to work together to solve a common problem for Germany's plight, to enforce the rules, or even to look at the situation that was occurring as Hitler rose to power. No one was willing to stop Hitler before it was too late. There was too much appeasement and too much exhaustion from the first world war to pay attention to the rapid

developments that Germany was putting in force, such as a military that grew quickly in size and an extreme form of nationalism that was getting out of hand (Gellner, 1994). Britain and France did not have the ability themselves or the military to stop Germany from getting too greedy, too powerful, and from taking over other countries. It took the United States being forced to join the war (through the bombing of Pearl Harbor) to step in and stop Germany from seizing all of Europe. This was done by the United States in order to keep Germany in line. Reform of the political system in Germany and a solid system being put into place to observe what was coming could have kept Hitler from gaining too much power (1994). A more powerful international organization than the League of Nations (such as formation of the UN, which only occurred after World War II) that had more authority could have solved many of these problems and those of World War I as well.

The United States and the USSR could quite possibly have gone to war if they wanted to, perhaps if they had not been as concerned about the threat of killing civilians or if they were so determined to wipe out the other form of ideology to the point that killing civilians was insignificant, so long as the threat was no longer there. The US almost felt that Communism was a fate that was so extreme that that was it almost worse than death at one point in time. We were willing to do anything to prevent its spread, even investing an excessive number of dollars in sophisticated nuclear weapons that could wipe out entire populations with one bomb. If civilians, as stated before, were of little concern to us, and if the Soviets were really considered the “bad guys” and equivalent to Hell on Earth, our polar opposites, during the Cold War, then we could have moved quickly to launch significant nuclear strikes on them (Gaddis, 1987). However, the reality was that we also knew that they had equivalent nukes, and any pre-emptive attack on the Soviets would have triggered a similar fate for the United States as well in terms of mass casualties, ultimate destruction, and nuclear devastation across the country (1987). If we were also more concerned about maintaining our status as the ultimate superpower and living up to the old ideals of the days of Athens and Sparta, when pride was of utmost importance, and doing anything to keep it, the Soviets quite possibly could have been attacked by the United States. Negotiations would then never have come through.

Only the most stable democracies have been able to keep the peace because of a solid political system in place and a means to enforce it. In addition, the backing of an international organization and allies to assist us in the case of a crisis allows a country to be truly safe from a violent civil war. Certain states, though are not able to keep the peace or become invaded by other countries because of the age-old desires for power and prestige (Gaddis, 1987). The availability of dangerous nuclear weapons on the market and the threat of using them always jeopardizes the goal for a world in which peace should be maintained. More active international involvement in the United Nations by states other than the United States is needed if freedom is to be fully functioning in all of these countries. Everyone should cooperate on the same level and understand each other enough to realize what conflicts are occurring in certain countries and always to prepare for the worst. Strong alliances are vital to keeping these promises, and if things work out properly, situations can be taken care of quickly and efficiently, with little bloodshed (1987). This is why there will always be a necessity for an international police force that has the skills necessary for this type of work, and they need to be able to be dispatched at any time. Of course, the particular one in the United States serves this purpose and will continue to in the future.

The reasons for war come down to a few simple answers: power and the desire to gain prestige from others. Other means throughout history have been linked to security and a defense mechanism in the face of a perceived threat. Athens and Sparta can be most linked to these two. Other reasons may result from nationalism that is taken too far and the hostility that results, as World War I teaches us. Allowing one country to become too powerful can lead to dire straits, such as the rise of Hitler in World War II. The race to become the major superpower or global hegemon, the feeling of a need to impress, or to let fear of a certain ideology escalate to a state of paranoia can result in an event like the Cold War (Gaddis, 1987). These can all be held in check if they are caught early and observed upon, and war should never be necessary to solve international conflicts. Learning how to negotiate out of war and satisfying both parties without infringing on anyone's rights is, in fact, the best remedy, and the alternative options available to avoid war prove that one does not need nuclear weapons or to hold someone at gunpoint to prove a point. As a result of

all of these measures taken, the promise of an international organization to uphold the law, and the lessons learned from our history, the goal for world peace is becoming more of a reality at the present time. With each new day, we may move back a step because of threats to peace or other conflicts, but for each step backward at this point in time, we seem to move two steps forward.

In conclusion, what we see is that the need for security and the idea of scarcity has led humanity with the constant belief that competition among each other is the only assurance of survival. From the beginning of exploration to nation building humanity has established structures to suppress and guide others on how to exploit human labor for excessive production. However, the outcome always yields the same minimum result of resistance and rebellion, which causes more war and suppression of some lighter or harder source. No civilization has been able to claim the utopia suggested by Locke or egalitarianism aimed for by Thomas Jefferson. It is this constant shadow of Thomas Hobbes' conviction of competition that has guided humanity in the 21st century and onward. The Cold War and the arms race nearing the end of the 1900s led to a mixture of capitalism, militarism, and industrialism all at once. This drove the global system and its hegemonic superpower, America, into a system seeking security through engaging in warfare (Gaddis, 1987). War and Homeland security became the focus point of all major Western nations following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. During this era in history, Homeland Security and Global collaboration became synonymous with war and militarism. What came to be known as the "War against terror" has concluded to be an ongoing war with no end. The current enemy has morphed from nation states, or tyrants into an ideology that cannot be contained or destroyed through the use of military engagement. Therefore, the international system has invested years into uprooting all forms of believed terrorism throughout the world. The Realist approach teaches that this is a war with no end rooted in history, guided throughout human existence for the purpose of seeking eternal security.

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