

Original Paper

On Wars

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Abstract

Representatives of the states of the world must find other means of conflict handling than warfare. The increasing tension between open and closed societies calls for new mechanisms of intergovernmental interaction. Intervention in Burma is necessary to hinder a new example of the meaninglessness of warfare. The war in Palestine fits perfectly the concept of a senseless warfare. The wisdom of classical theorists is no longer relevant in the nuclear stage of mankind.

Keywords

theories of war, rationality in war, war and uncertainty, human egoism and aggressiveness, socio-biology

Introduction

“Auslese” is typical of all social life, stated Max Weber (1978). The world population is soon 8 billion persons, but society supplies far from this amount of opportunities. Thus, there will be selection, whether peacefully or violently in economic or political affairs.

Selection can be *institutionalized* as in democratic elections, or be fraudulent like in rigged markets. Since selection is omnipresent in social life, it is understandable that one insists upon justice. Does selection entail warfare?

Socio-biology

There is nothing similar to the theory of natural selection outside of animal kingdom. In advanced bio-social theory, Dawkins argues forcefully that genetic Darwinism explains the principle of natural selection. The Selfish Gene (2020) presents an argument that gene selfishness = survival. Could it apply outside the animal kingdom? Wilson is convinced that more and more cultural phenomena will be reduced to genetics—see Consilience—no doubt an exaggeration.

Socio-biologist Dawkins has not drawn evolution implications about mankind like Wilson. One may raise the objection of circular reasoning: survival = fittest gene. But here I will mention that more and more humans impact upon Darwinian selection through global warming or poaching and looting etc., and depletion of fish stocks.

Organised Selection

Political as well as economic competition is heavily institutionalized in well-ordered societies. Since success brings big rewards in politics and huge prizes in economic life, selection has to honour principles of *justice*:

Political competition: majority rule, transparency, rule of law, separation of powers, no embezzling in public administration, habeas corpus;

Economic competition: openness of entry, rules of the market economy, neutrality, transparency. Countries have specific oversight agencies to police these institutions of fairness in competition to promote impartiality in politics and economic life. But selection of benefits there will definitely be. Life is "*auslese*".

It is of course a question to what extent democracy and the market economy achieve impartiality, given the real differences in income and wealth. A number of institutions are typically available for citizen complaint such as courts, Ombudsman and consumer advocacy.

Warfare and Selection

Mankind has not succeeded in eliminating the worst kind of social selection: war. One can go to Clausewitz to make a distinction between warfare and murder, underlining the political context of the former, but it is enough to watch Yemen today to grasp the consequences of warfare. War is highly selective, separating the lucky from the miserable. When a superpower goes to war like in Iraq or Syria, there are countless innocent casualties. Why war?

Selfishness

The corresponding factor to Dawkins' selfish gene governing animal kingdom is human egoism. It tends to be enlightened selfishness in human interactions or affairs. If human action, individual or collective, is to be interpretatively understandable by means of the conceptual framework of *means* and *ends* (Weber, 2012), then human behaviour would be either goal directed as in religion or rationally instrumental as in economics or politics. The game theory model of rational choice comes from the means-end approach by restricting means and ends to realisable phenomena. My starting-point is definitely *Epicurean*, humans being orientated in terms of egoistic interests most of the time. Whether human egoism resides in selfish genes or in reason in the sense data world, will not be discussed here.

History and Warfare

It is war that begins known human history. When the hunter-gatherers had settled down to be farmers, according to the theory of Diamond, the first annals or chronicles inform about warlords or clan leaders who have reached local control enough to name themselves “King” and create a *dynasty*. The annals refer to their accomplishments in warfare, i.e. pillage of, land grabbing in and overlords over neighbouring peoples. This pattern of invasion and counter attack goes on for hundreds of years in the then civilisations of the Nile, Euphrates, Indus and Yellow River.

Dynasties come and go. The kings or emperors boast over their victories or pillages in architecture, favouring pharaonic monuments. Religions are invented to bolster the dynasty.

The employment of the most aggressive form of egoism appears in the many tales of the first civilisations in Egypt, the fertile Crescent, Mesopotamia and Indus Valley and China. Empire results in China and the Roman republic or Principate. The richer the documents become during the Ancient Period, the more we learn about war, manifested in major analyses in strategy: one from China and the other from Greece: Sun Tzu and Thucydides.

Warfare becomes an option when a group of humans has reached enough internal organisation to launch an attack on another group of humans using the technology of killing. When a group splits in two or more subgroups attacking each other we have the civil war. The key elements in warfare are attack, defence and counterattack. The meaning of war is the subjective intention of the combatants or players. Objectively, war has no sense. Without strategy war is meaningless and tactics depend upon strategy and not vice versa.

Reasons of War

A list of war objectives below is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

1) Looting

Pillage is both end and means. It may be a form of payment or a kind of bonus. Victory involves the *spolia* according to the Romans. Massive looting was typical with Timur Lenk financing Samarkand and Bukhara. Looting covered all considered precious, not the least slaves. The Vikings began as looters. Loot could be boosted with triumph—see Trajan's Steele.

2) Ruining

To lay waste to the enemy involves more than pillage. Land, harvest and buildings can be burned to weaken neighbours either ex ante or ex post an attack.

3) Subjugating

History is replete with examples of one group invading another group, usually for a shorter period of time. A warlord with a title of king, sultan or emir or emperor may extend his rule to other groups of people, which may succeed for only a period. The king may also want to prolong his rule into the future

by creating a *dynasty* securing the throne for his family or clan.

4) Vengeance

Human motives of a rather simple kind may unleash hell. Alexander the Great crushed the empire that meddled in Greek affairs.

5) Eliminating

The purpose of war became greasily when the enemy is to be wiped from earth. Instead of incorporating the enemy population, the attackers look for eliminations once forever. The republic of Rome did not only defeat Carthage but also eliminated its entire population. Similar events occurred in Mongol warfare and Turkish wars.

6) Power grabbing

The aim of war may be to grab power like a crown without a king is an opportunity. Adversary or adversaries may happen to be weak presenting a chance to defeat them. The Napoleonic wars lead to no peace until he was himself defeated.

7) Anticipating

War may come when a belligerent may find that his opponent prefers to attack instead of waiting for the other's attack. Israel conducted the six days war with a stunning surprise for Egypt, which threatened war against Israel.

8) Dominating

In economic affairs, war is often employed for the purpose of domination over commerce and trade. The British Empire reached hegemony over the seas by access to the key commercial routes and trading posts around the globe.

States

When the state enters the war games besides warlords and city-states, the objectives become territorial and the balance of power or domination. In reality, war is a relation between people whatever legal institutions apply. Feudal wars were highly personal in motivation, whereas state wars come with obscure notions like state interests, nation saving and racial myths.

Socio-biology and War

A spokesman for socio-biology may argue that religion emerges as a tool in warfare. We do not know whether Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed were real persons, but the consequences of the myths were purportedly real:

Christianity destroying the Roman Empire;

Islam uniting the Arab tribes in order to conquer;

Buddhism as the rational foundation of oriental despotism (Ashoka). One may reject such socio-biology linking beliefs and aggression, but one finds it with Gibbon, Nietzsche and Weber for instance.

Technology

War relies much upon information and innovation. Both attackers and defendants search for the most effective weapons available. Asymmetry in access to the most effective weapons available may imply victory. The German panzers were not on a par with the T34s until the Tigers were launched, in too few numbers. Hitler did not understand the logic of nuclear weapons, but insisted upon ever larger tanks and canons until almost immovable. *First strike capacity* would matter much for the Superpowers. The use of tactical atomic bombs according to Kahn is not realistic due to escalation as no one has pre-emptive strike capability.

Rational Selfishness

Clausewitz delivered a general theory of large scale war by focusing upon objective and subjective factors. His intention was to cover the situation that would make attacking reasonable or probable. He included not only favourable circumstances but also the will to victory. This analysis is now outdated in so far as war between superpowers is concerned. The reason is that nuclear forces enhance *second mover advantage*. In fact, lack of first strike capability makes nuclear confrontation unlikely.

However, the superpowers may be involved in local or proxy wars. If it is impossible to destroy a superpower in a first attack, then the counter attack will be unsupportable for the attacker. *Second mover advantage* rules out nuclear war except by mistake.

The idea of rationality in war or warfare is murky even if one limits the analysis to the period Clausewitz looked at. Tolstoy's view of the Napoleon wars seems more truthful. In the largest military effort ever *Barbarossa*, one notes terrible mistakes, first by Stalin and then by Hitler.

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War Literature

The analytical books on warfare are surprisingly few considering the huge number of them and their enormously devastating consequences. One can count only 6 major analyses. What is entirely lacking is the perspective of the soldiers. The horrors of the soldiers in modern warfare were first emphasized by Henri Dunant after Solferino. However, the suffering of soldiers became even worse at Verdun, Moscow and Stalingrad. Why put up with this madness? "Hell no we won't go!" Mercenaries are paid

their own price but conscripts cost very little. Any feedback mechanism against meaningless warfare like Operation Blau, Algerian war or the Iraq invasion?

How to protect POWs? Stunningly, more than 500 000 soviet soldiers capitulated during Barbarossa. Why? They would merely be put to death somehow. The meaningless of war is obvious in the German revenge on Italian soldiers after the fall of Mussolini, simply murdered (Cephalonia)

Meaning of War

The great theoreticians sought the rational war. It doesn't exist, because the probabilities involved can't be correctly calculated. What looks promising often turns negative. The Libyan intervention failed, the Iraq invasion unleashed enormous sufferings, and the Yemen proxy war entails hell on Earth. War should be outlawed to be replaced by other mechanisms. Why did the Syrians not simply vote on all their differences?

Local Wars

The superpowers may meddle in the local wars without risk of nuclear escalation. The local conflict support varies from weapons or airstrikes to diplomatic support. The Russian involvement in Syria was decisive just as the US led invasion of Iraq had enormous consequences without change to the global balance of power. There is foreign interference in troubled hotspots like Libya, Middle East and the Himalayas. But nothing compares to a conflict between China and the US. The difference between local and global conflicts is escalation. It seems that China is involved in conflicts that could escalate.

China's Assertiveness

China has changed its foreign policy with the new president. It is both more national and communist at the same time. The uniqueness of China is its form of communism, which China wants to uphold through national policies. Thus, any threat to China will provoke a most firm response, whether it is a matter of Chinese

qfirms abroad or Hong Kong's status. China asserts itself today with:

Economic development strategies in several foreign countries;

Pressure in the Himalayas against *inter alia* India and Bhutan;

Attempts to increase control over South China Sea.

In several developing counties, for instance in Africa and Sri Lanka, China constructs and runs several huge projects in infrastructure, mining and railways. The financial commitments of China are immense, secured somehow.

China is emphasising the control over its extreme provinces, i.e., Xinjiang and Tibet, although this meets with local resistance. As China did not sign the 1914 Treaty on borders, it raises territorial claims

against India, which led to the 1962 war. Yet, the conflict will hardly escalate. The strategic value of the Himalayas is not worth the potential costs of nuclear confrontation that could spread to Pakistan.

The South China Sea

Matters are different with regard to the China-US clash. For reasons that are difficult to understand, China claims the waterways outside of China's coast are interior to the country, which is not upheld by the International Court. The neighbouring states reject China's standpoint. These waterways are crucial for world trade and best regulated internationally. When combined with the issue of Taiwan, we have the possibility of war. The scenarios of confrontation are multiple but they all imply the risk of escalation.

Despite the Chinese effort of making the South China Sea part of China's territorial water, the reaction from neighbours and the US makes it an abortive project. China cannot take on the might of the US for such a small prize, even with Taiwan included.

As a matter of fact, China would lose such a confrontation that would escalate quickly, perhaps bringing in Russia.

Conclusion

It now seems that a future war would involve China against the US, each backed by coalitions. It will end in total destruction: how meaningless! How to resolve the confrontation between the *closed* and *open* societies will become *the major issue* besides global warming.

Now several young Palestinians have died although they would surely have contributed to the welfare of this *etnie*. How to set up a mechanism that could hinder all this devastation *ex ante* instead of the enormous costs *ex post*?

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