

Original Paper

The Two Wars and the Losses

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Abstract

Why is there war? Warfare occurs between states as in the Ukraine or between a state and militias as in the Middle East. The history of human civilization is replete with them. The main textbooks in politics point at the state, or more specifically the big power states on the planet searching for security and dominance by means of warfare sometimes. This paradigm is used by Professor John Mearsheimer when accounting for the wars today. Findings?

Keywords

warfare, loss, paradox of war, Pyrrhus

1. Introduction

In the so-called *realist* approach to international relations the theory adduces mundane reasons for action including warfare. *Normativity* or moralism is not relevant. Mearsheimer has written a lot about *active realism*, conveyed in frequent lectures around the world. Where we find his analyses of the Ukraine and Israeli. It may be interesting to contrast Mearsheimer with Jeffrey Sachs' economy views, especially on Israel. In economics the analyst takes a broader view than realism and its state egoism as with *Pareto optimality*.

2. The Ukraine War

Both Mearsheimer and Sachs argue for the NATO expansion case as cause of the war. The counter argument that Putin wanted to crush a troublesome neighbour is not developed. Zelenskyj hoping to bolster democracy and sovereignty believed perhaps naively that the promises of help from West would guarantee his victory. It was all a game of persons. When reports of huge casualties started, Zelenskyj tried in vain to receive a quick entry to NATO and the EU.

The Ukraine war does not fit realist theory of states colliding over dominance. Individuals played major roles and people in warfare mean *mistake*. War is the mistake in strategy or tactics, one-sidedly or two-sidedly sending young men into death or disability.

3. Focus of War

Clausewitz' theory of war identifies two key aspects that may hold all the myriad activities together: strategy or the overarching goal of war and tactics or the means to that end. The problem of the Ukraine war lies exactly here: what does Putin want with Kiev? No NATO and EU membership or total submission?

Russia has targeted civilians by destroying dwellings and the infrastructure like energy. Given the distance between the strategies, there is no compromise in sight: Ukraine as unfree and the black sea as western.

The West has provided billions to Ukraine that has put up the soldiers. An acceptable peace would look like what to the Ukraine, West and Russia? The warfare in Ukraine has been exceptionally costly and brutal involving atrocities besides an ethnical conflict.

It is believed that Trump could end this war quickly. But wars have a tendency to linger on despite rationality, negative outcomes only calling for escalation. The Ukraine War may be the start of world war III. So much had been saved if it had never occurred, the warring parties anticipating the enormous LOSSES.

Clausewitz never analysed losses at all. Length their size and meaninglessness. He was impressed by Napoleon running up and down Europe delivering brilliant *decisive battles* up until France was finally defeated. The loss perspective on warfare has increased as war against civilians has become characteristic. The post Clausewitz war is as a game for soldiers as civilian destruction.

4. Compensation Instead of War

One may engage in a thought experiment: suppose Ukraine had accepted not to enter NATO or EU but stayed democratic and autonomous, why would Putin invade? The huge support from the West could be invested in the green transformation of some former USSR countries. No dead or wounded young men!

5. Gaza and Lebanon Wars

Israel has brought the loss function of warfare to its unimaginable height when bombing daily civilian dwellings. The policy of war by IDF attempts to eradicate djihadism with two militias, HAMAS (sunni) and HEZBOLLAH (shia). It has been pointed out that the loss functions are in no way proportional.

Interestingly, Mearsheimer and Sachs share a negative view of Netanyahu. According to the former "Israel is in deep trouble"—a stunning assessment coming from a neorealist scholar. Sachs constructs the Pareto optimal of a two states solution based on pre 1967 border. But he does not understand that it is not Nash or self-enforced. Equally stunning is the argument of Bernard-Henry Lévy in his book *Israel Alone*. Given the unconditional support of the USA since 1948, there is no power that can withstand the country in the Middle East.

6. Institutions of Warfare

During the 20th century a number of initiatives aimed to make war less brutal and cruel. This normativity effort was of limited success. However, a legal framework for the conduct of warfare was established by two courts, the world court and the court of criminal justice buttressed by a variety of valid judgments. This scope of public international law is not comprehensively enforced, but it is directed against Israel and also Hamas.

The illegal attack and taking of hostages on 7.10 2023 by Hamas militia has set off a more than one year bombing of Gaza with enormous casualties. There has been military operations in the West bank killing Palestinians. As a response to rockets and drones by Hezbollah, the IDF has bombed Lebanon, with many casualties. The institutions of war prohibit the Israeli bombing in Gaza and the interference in the West bank, but enforcement is lacking—the problem of international law.

Israel may defend its indiscriminate bombing by the omnipresence of Hamas in Gaza. For one who has visited Israel several times, the intended starvation of children to death came as a huge shock.

7. Gaza Suffering

The predicament of Arabs is such that the Palestinian leadership must now reconsider strategy. Since the one-sided proclamation of the state of Israel, the main goal has been to liberate Palestine. Every time violence is used, Israel has grown in size, compare with the UN division 1947. Now the Palestinians face the Greater Israel dominating all of the original British mandate. The big loser is the jihadism, Hamas and Hezbollah, not Israel as according to Mearsheimer and Sachs.

Djihadism leads everywhere to the same, namely death and sorrow—in Pakistan, Iraq and Gaza. Djihadism is a 20th century phenomenon interpreting Islam as a closed system with a new duty: jihad against non-Muslims.

8. Conclusion

War is analysed as zero sum games. Like chess, the outcomes involve win, lose or draw. However, in warfare there is a fourth possibility: both lose. Pyrrhus anticipated the paradox of warfare: even the winning party suffers too large loss functions. These have accelerated beyond imagination; there is no end in sight. Nuclear war? That would be the paradox of war with a vengeance.

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