

# WAR STORIES

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# Introduction

How do states go to war? What are the circumstances? What is the process? I began this work because I was struck by how often, when talking of possible war, my friends introduced recent wars into the conversation. When talk turned to intentions, that conversation too was punctuated by fragments from history. As I listened, I gradually became persuaded that every political conversation proceeds by offering and comparing *selected fragments of larger stories*, from which the fragments are drawn and which they in turn invoke. Politics, however, is always about the future, even when past and present are the ostensible subjects. I then realized that political proposals too had all the qualities of stories, that both were interpretive products of imagination, that retold experience supplied much of the stuff from which war plans were made, and that a plan for future war had to be much like a tale of war past.

Much could be gained, it seemed, by exploring these practices more fully. Some were just taken for granted, or appeared to lie outside the field of political studies. For whatever reasons, war studies centered on the quest for *causes*, causes of types of wars and of war 'in general', reflecting a supposition that determinate causes and determinate patterns of general causes are the proper object of scholarly inquiry and their discovery its singular purpose. If the search for 'causes' gave every evidence of being up a blind alley, could that be because the passage from non-war to war was of a different character, more mundane in its reliance on the ordinary, and yet far more complex than any scheme to identify determinate causes could compass? Were the actual paths to war in specific cases simply tied to the historical and political particulars of those cases so strongly that 'general causes' were an illusion? Could indeterminacy and resistance to closure be brought inside a treatment which gave names to those same political practices which others were canvassing for causes?

Since it is the leaders who act for or through political structures—states and movements—the first step was to sketch an account which stressed the interplay between leadership and the use of stories. Revised to sharpen the point as this study went on, these were the main steps suggested by typical accounts of the onset of war, but giving more weight to the role of stories than is usually given:

*First*, the fundamental precondition for war is that it is hard to build and easy to destroy. This leads to fear of attack, and greed for spoils. Many authors cite fear and opportunity as underlying sources of war.

*Second*, leaders are puzzled by the threats and opportunities they perceive, especially by threats. Far from being clear and decisive, they are profoundly unsure what to do. They feel themselves on familiar terrain, but also discern novel challenges and uncertainties. They can't be sure what others will do, or how any initiatives will play out.

*Third*, they believe they must act. The incentives to act are strong. Action is part of their job: they see it that way, and they think others do too. So they ask themselves: "what should we do? what is *appropriate* in these circumstances?"

*Fourth*, this launches them on a quest for *appropriate models*, in stories and remembered experience. They will draw upon accounts of past wars in deciding what action is 'appropriate' and what to avoid. These accounts are *war stories*. Of course, such accounts are always representations of the events they purport to capture and summarize, selective and artificial. Even when stories are the work of craftsmen seeking to cleave to the events 'as they occurred', accounts inevitably distort lived experience in its richness, connections, sources, intentions of the participants, and consequences. And so war stories are unavoidably *fictions*, *fictions required by the need to talk*, the need to share and assess interpreted experience for confirmation itself and as a prelude to possible action.

*Fifth*, they will merge elements from war stories with novel designs, fitted to the specific problem or opportunity they face, to form *war plans*. War plans are a special kind of war story, a story about the future. They are *fictions required by the need to act*.

*Sixth*, every step—characterizing the situation, attributing intention to others, drawing selectively on accounts of the past, designing measures for the future, constructing the war plan, offering reasons for its prudence and prospective efficacy—is an inherently *interpretive* and *imaginative* move. In any complex polity, participants will conceive a

multitude of differing interpretations and dispute an array of contending plans. As explained in Chapter 7, plans become salient proposals because of their promise, but a plan is selected because doubts, hesitations, preference for alternatives, and resistance to it no longer meet the negotiated standard of ‘adequate objection’ in the group entrusted with decision. A decision to war does not require that participants hold the same interpretations or prefer the same plan. Therefore there can be no general answer to the questions “what is the cause of war?” or “why are wars fought?” The problem of ‘war causes’ fiercely resists closure.

*Seventh*, but the leadership—believing itself impelled to act—must have closure, which it achieves by submitting the issue of war to *authoritative decision*. Only in that way can it mobilize hands and resources for the concerted campaign which war requires. For a moment—only a moment—interpretation is frozen, and a text is agreed. And then the floodgates of interpretation and improvisation open again.

So one way to read this book is that it is about how leaders choose war. I invite the reader to set aside the model of cool, rational calculators in a Realist world. I suggest instead a world of reasoned but imperfect choice, reliant upon necessarily fictive accounts, in which plans designed to guide action have all the fictive qualities of the accounts from which they are in part drawn. In this world decision itself is an act of political magic, a public illusion by which political institutions suspend interpretation, but for only a fleeting instant, followed by the rebirth and renewal of interpretive display.

#### *War Scripts Convey That War is Appropriate*

This book can also be read as a story of ‘war scripts’. War scripts are general templates representing war as an appropriate response to ‘circumstances like this’. They range from complex contingency plans of the General Staff or Joint Chiefs to street talk: “Anyone push us around, we beat ‘em up.” We argue that the idea that ‘making war’ is appropriate in any circumstances is an unusual idea, but is available through experience, and especially through accounts of war and dispute. Generalized, it is expressed in war scripts.

The problem for a nation-state is how to achieve security without encouraging the war script. Every measure for defense thickens the war script itself. This is the counterpart in politics to the security dilemma in arming for defense.

To begin a people only need to imagine that there is, or might be, a threatening external enemy. It is easy to say there is one, and hard to prove that one could not appear. Then war scripts spring up. They respond to the question “given threats, or possible threats, what should we do?” The war script provides ready-made ways to prepare to defend against external attack. In our world raising and training an army is the most obvious. To create and keep an army-in-being is also costly, so there must be some ongoing agreement to fund the army.

Once a nation-state has gone this far—and almost every nation-state has—the war script is reinforced in training barracks, appropriations committees, electoral halls, and elementary classrooms. It has advocates: analysts, veterans, serving troops, suppliers, and throughout civil society those who remember threats, or who have come to believe threat real.

Of course, they may be right about the risks of attack and annihilation. How are they to assess the risks?

War stories, accounts and hypotheticals, are the main resource both for assessing risk and for drafting war plans in response. War is a complex activity, with much at stake, so it must be thoroughly prepared. At every level, from leadership’s grand strategic orientation to the most mundane tactical preparations of a squad, there must be plans and routines, well-designed and practiced. War plans are also war stories.

In a community which practiced lively and deliberative politics, people would consider the significance of war stories which circulate, and the war scripts to which they give rise. If there are better ways to achieve security than by reliance on the war scripts which now dominate political discourse, what are they, and how can they be placed on the table? This is a second way to read *War Stories*, and some pragmatic maxims are developed in Chapter 11.

### *Radical Assumptions*

There is a third way to read this book. Consider it an essay introducing a few straightforward but radical assumptions about politics and then working out their implications. Read this way, war is just an example, but an especially useful one because war and preparing for war are so consequential. What are these ideas?

*Intent and stories.* Politics begins in personal intent. People build their political world through conversation. Experience and everything we’ve learned about the world from others is carried in stories.



*Negotiation and construction.* The activity which defines politics is negotiation: talk about stories, talk about meanings and reasons, and talk about projects. All political and social life is constructed in this way. Politics is open.

*Decisions and promises.* To engage in projects—understood as complementary undertakings which people believe will bring about desired outcomes they cannot achieve alone—people must decide together and exchange promises.

*Interpretation and renegotiation.* Thereafter their performances are open to critical assessment, interpretation, renegotiation, and revision.

*Imagination and design.* We are free to interpret and design imaginatively. Design is open.

Cultural practices and social institutions, understood in this way, are both fields for negotiation and its ongoing consequence. Complementary projects require reliable expectations.

Through stories and experience, we learn a great deal about natural constraints, existing cultural constraints and opportunities, and what people have tried to do in the past. Still, in complex matters how constraint, interpretation, design, initiative, and action will yield an outcome cannot be *a priori* determined.

*Reasoned negotiation, not subject to closure.* Properly understood, politics centers on the negotiation of interpretations, reasons, and projects. Accounts—stories—and reasons to adopt or reject them are not subject to closure.

*Politics distinguished from coercion.* ‘Properly understood’: because politics for this text is not a manipulative or coercive practice. Coercion is ‘coercion’. War is anti-political. On the politics side of the line are complex bargains, assembling coalitions, satisfying interests, withholding boons; on the coercive side are threats, silencings, exploitation, and violence. Nothing draws the line more sharply than war.

*Ongoing process, admitting pragmatic choice, but not permitting closure.* Politics is an open and ongoing process, not subject to discoverable rules. People act, and do not ‘behave’.

*Implications.* Party-building is useful, central to the gathering together of coalitions for broad, ambitious political programs. Gnawing partisanship is corrosive, but vigorous debate, clarifying differences, builds civil society. An approach consistent with our view would value productive distinctions, illustrated by closely-examined cases, and exploring possibilities for political design. An approach deprecated by

this view focuses researchers on ‘findings’ with ‘new theoretical content’ as part of a ‘theory-building research program’.

*Norms for Stable Security in a World of Politics*

This work can also be read as a program for war avoidance. The final chapter proposes a set of prudent policies to avert and constrain war. It takes as its starting point the existence of war scripts, beliefs that war is ‘appropriate in some circumstances’, and the existence of nuclear weapons. The policies proposed form an interdependent whole. Some are familiar, elegant even though shelfworn with disuse, such as ‘collective security’. In May 2000 France, China, Britain, the United States, and Russia (the N5/P5) made a solemn “unequivocal undertaking” to abolish nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> Other proposals derive from the special arguments of this text, especially those for an ‘active mutual reassurance regime’ and ‘vivid portrayal’ of war and pacific settlement.

For all its reliance on stories, war is still chosen ‘on purpose’, and I hold those who choose it responsible. At least they should be held to show that their society’s freedom or safety was at risk, that their action was proportionate, and that they had reasonably exhausted the alternatives.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> France, China, Britain, the United States, and Russia, the ‘nuclear Five’ or the UN Security Council ‘permanent Five’, committed themselves to the concluding consensus document of the Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference, 24 April - 19 May 2000. Some take this as a restatement of their obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Acceptance of this language does not prefigure prompt abandonment of nuclear weapons, but it ensures that nuclear abolition, and how to sustain adequate security without nuclear weapons, must now be planned and discussed. These terms also change the context of Israeli, Pakistani, and Indian nuclear weapon programs.

<sup>2</sup> “At least.” In practice, I would set a higher bar or more explicit requirement on every point. The risk must be unusual, greater than the risks that all societies and polities must accept in our present circumstances. The risk to freedom must be fundamental, imperiling the capacity to conduct politics through which freedom is continuously recreated and reasserted. The threat to safety must be ‘large’ by comparison to the experience of insecurity which the society accepts as normal in ordinary life.

The ‘action’ is not confined to actually making war, but includes provocative acts: posturing, demonstration, threat, coercion. The notion of proportionality is adapted from ‘just war theory’. Each of these standards, as well as the standard of having ‘reasonably exhausted’ alternatives, can only be politically negotiated; a well-ordered global community would elaborate expectations about the uses of pacific settlement which the community *expected* participants in a dispute to exhaust before claiming a right to provocation or violence.

*Hard to Build, Easy to Destroy*

This work exists because of a general condition of human enterprise, to be borne in mind throughout: it is hard to build, and easy to destroy. Just what that means, and the extent to which it will plague society, is an open issue, subject to negotiation, in which this work is an entry. We do not expect closure on this issue, but we do believe it admits to reasoned exchange, and that members of a political society owe such a conversation to all those who walk beside them.

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The author maintains a website introducing this book at

<http://www.learnworld.com/WarStories/>

where the reader may find acknowledgments, responses, and links to germane materials on the Web and in print. The author's email address is: [larkin@learnworld.com](mailto:larkin@learnworld.com)



# 1 Choice

Is war inescapable? Is it the work of aggressors? Of madmen? The rough duty of the civilized? The price of freedom?

Or is war, as many hold, the result of preexisting conditions and ongoing change: in the distribution of wealth and technology, in asymmetries of raw power and geography, in economic striving, demographics, ethnicities? Or is war simply the defining expression of the state?

This text begins from the premise that war is best understood as a purposive and unacceptable act. The aim is to know war so that it can be averted. Averting ‘war’ in the abstract means averting possible war in concrete circumstances, one occasion at a time.

## *‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ Questions*

In striving to understand a war, the question which first comes to hand is ‘why?’ Why did this war occur? What were its causes? And since the distinguishing features of wars—their eruption, their violence, their destructiveness, their hatreds—mark them as somehow similar, people take the category ‘war’ as a useful one, and puzzle about ‘wars’. Why do people make war? What are wars’ causes?

Some theorists claim to explain recurrent war itself. In his heyday the realist theorist Kenneth Waltz wrote that theory will explain why societies experience war, though it will not predict any particular war.<sup>1</sup> Fair enough, though there are problems. If wars ensue, does that confirm the theory? How do we know that a war does not take place for some

<sup>1</sup> “A theory of international politics will, for example, explain why war recurs, and it will indicate some of the conditions that make war more or less likely; but it will not predict the outbreak of particular wars.” Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 69.

reason quite different from that given by the theorist? If I say there will be wars because the moon is made of green cheese, and wars ensue, have I offered a persuasive theory? If I cannot predict any particular war, have I offered a useful theory? If I say “under these conditions, war may occur” does it carry the matter much farther than village sages could carry it, gathered over beer? And is the assumption of stupidity—that people cannot learn enough from experience to stop making war—a sound basis for policy? What if—*what if*—they *might* learn not to make war, or not to make some kinds of war? Then how would one understand the “theory which explains why war recurs”?

Other writers insist that given wars spring inexorably from the past. We often hear a war spoken of as ‘inevitable’. If a particular war was ‘predictable’ on its eve, was it predictable a month earlier, or a year, a decade? If there is some point prior to which it is *unpredictable*, what is it that makes it ‘predictable’, if it ever is?

Jack Levy, in a thorough and friendly canvass of findings about ‘war causes’, concludes that the main puzzles remain unsolved.<sup>2</sup> He is candid, and his judgment sound. I believe the difficulty lies in trying to trace war from its antecedents, searching for a general causal structure that is ruleful and regular. But war is an activity of choices, not forces.

One promising path, then, is to study how any particular war was chosen. Choice may not be ruleful, but knowing how war was chosen in one case could help the practical man appreciate the circumstances in a different case. It is in this vein that Thucydides writes when he expresses the hope that his History will “be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it.”<sup>3</sup> There are many plausible accounts of war choice. These serve pragmatic instruction, but they do not explain war.

<sup>2</sup> Jack S. Levy, “The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence,” in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern and Charles Tilly [eds], *Behavior, Society and Nuclear War*, Volume I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 209–333.

<sup>3</sup> Thucydides [R. Crawley, translator], *The Complete Writings of Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), p. 14. Crawley’s translation, begun when he was “still almost a schoolboy,” was completed in 1874. Because of accessibility, and the familiarity of the translation, citations are to the Crawley translation. Pages refer to the 1934 edition. A new presentation of the Crawley translation, with many maps, annotations, appendices, and an extensive index, is Robert B. Strassler [ed], *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

This text sets the question ‘why?’ to one side, and focuses instead on the question ‘how?’ There are certainly patterns in *how* wars come to be undertaken. In contrast, the substantive antecedents of actual wars, their historical circumstances, the conflicts and disputes which precede them, and the motives of those who actually go to war are distinct and diverse. To come to an interpretation of the ‘why’ of any particular war, in this view, we would look thoroughly at the case itself. No great help would be found in leaning on ‘general causes’. Of course we would try to offer an account of participants’ reasons which would make sense to them, and another which took account of reasons to which they were blind. But as to general insights, they are more likely to concern process than substance. There are deep similarities in the ways in which war is chosen, more revelatory than the common presence of force and violence. A researcher who studies a case with these processual similarities in mind will have more and different things to say than the researcher who remains focused on cause alone.

Perhaps war could be averted. Knowing something about process could signal points on the path to war at which it could be stopped, or political intervention made to reduce its likelihood. This study concerns dispositions against war, and practical measures to make war less likely, as well as illuminating war choices.

As we observed in the Introduction, *vulnerability* provides a simple, general explanation for the availability of war as social practice. It makes war possible and, for some, attractive. It is not a ‘cause’ but a *pervasive condition*. Any measures to address war as a subject of public choice must take this condition into account.

#### *The Condition Which Makes War Possible*

War occurs because everything we value—ourselves, our goods, our crops, our societies, our infrastructures, and even our armies—is inherently vulnerable to deliberate harms. The human body, all our social constructs, the work of generations, can be reduced in a moment to a shamble of flesh and disorder. This is the Vulnerability Condition, an axiomatic starting-point for any study of war. All threats of violence depend on this Condition. The use of violence confirms it. Stated most succinctly the Condition is this: *it is hard to build and easy to destroy*.

This fact explains why the twin springs of war, fear and desire, are so intense, and are expressed in arms, threats, and war itself. People

imagine the war which could engulf them; they prepare to deter or defend. Or on the other hand, confident of their strength, anticipating gain from the threat or use of force, they scheme by threat and war.

It is also true, and the source of unending optimism, that most people prefer to build. They build homes, create families, fashion machines, conserve harvest, assemble ships, pull fiber, write code. They build on beginnings, achieving a complex fabric of exchanges and understandings. The very complexity of modern society, however, intensifies vulnerability, leveraging the effects of threats and violence. Once upon a time it was unthinkable that a civil aircraft might be the target of a suitcase bomb, or nerve gas spread in the subway. But today the vulnerability of civil networks, even in peacetime, underscores society's exposure to the great weapons of war. In 431 BC the Athenians brought their families into Athens, "and all their household furniture, even to the woodwork of their houses," in anticipation of a Spartan attack on the Attic plain.<sup>4</sup> But in 1940, open to attack from the air, London sent its children to the countryside and the colonies.

#### *How is War Undertaken?*

Any given war is begun by ordinary men and women. They are individuals with names and personal histories, working with others in groups. They face some situation—of danger, or of opportunity—for which they judge a *war gambit* necessary or appropriate. They choose war, or an act short of war which is at least ambiguously provocative, and they do so on purpose. They know how to make war. They have heard about war, read about war, seen war films, perhaps taken part in war, and understand what it means to be prepared for war.

Of course, that requires a place and time for choosing. In a dictatorship, the ruler alone might choose. But in today's modern, participatory states choice is exercised by constitutional bodies and officers, meeting in formal session. This choice is an *authoritative decision for war*, or an *authoritative decision* to commit an ambiguously provocative act.

It may seem obvious that war is chosen. But contrary views are widely held: that war 'breaks out', that it is 'forced on' states, that it is 'accidental'. But here the obvious is true, and contrary views wrong, because the two parties at odds with each other could agree not to fight.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.



But what about war which follows insult, or perceived injury? Are leaders really free? Pressures on leadership to act ‘as expected’ when national territory or security is thought to be threatened are real. A central theme of this book is that leaders rely on ‘scripts’ or accounts as sources for how to act. But there are also ‘scripts’ of pacific settlement. There are abundant examples that long-standing enemies can settle their quarrels.

States do force others into war: one leadership, in a given situation, chooses to start a war rather than pursue pacific settlement. *Pace* Geoffrey Blainey’s legalistic demurral that there is no war if the second party declines to resist, we can reasonably say that the overrun state has had war thrust upon it. And what of provocative acts short of war? These too are purposive choices, and do have an element of ‘forcing’; elsewhere in this text we argue that such provocative initiatives are also *war gambits* for which the initiator bears responsibility.

Still, it is important to understand why belief in ‘accidental war’ and war ‘forced’ on the state is so widespread and deeply held. The main reason is that the wars known to us, so terrible in scope and effects, appear outside rational calculation. Even revolutionary leaders who claimed glory for ‘seizing state power’ in bloody civil war said that both they and those who sought to suppress them were instruments of history. So WWI is attributed to ‘accident’ and WWII to a madman or to ‘inevitable striving for hegemony’.

Failing to distinguish a *chosen* war from *war which could not have been refused* illustrates confusion between the onset of a war and its subsequent course. In fact, in WWI, WWII, and the Chinese Civil War there were explicit choices to breach civil relations and adopt war as an initiative. War was not necessary. But once war was under way—once parties had adopted the war script to pursue purposes and to resist—options grew narrow indeed. Warring escaped its original intentions; it was deliberately pressed beyond them; class enemies were crushed; victors demanded ‘unconditional surrender’; and the means brought into play in 1945 wrought destruction unimaginable in 1939. It is not true that war is ‘forced’ by circumstance, but it is true that the war which ensues is never the war which was chosen. In this vein, A. J. P. Taylor has written that “Wars, when they come, are always different from the war that is expected.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1964), p. 151.

In a later chapter the authoritative decision for war is probed more fully. Here we simply record that the choice implies purposive actions: a plan. It may be rough, only a guideline. Leadership chooses a 'war plan' which it considers appropriate to the situation.

Choice is usually collective but requires a 'yes' or 'no' from each qualified participant, who is asked to agree to a text (declaration, resolution). Each person who takes part stands between the repertoire of available war scripts and the moment of decision. No one can offer a sure account of any person's choice in these circumstances, even if she herself offers an explicit account. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of evidence that a society's next war plan reflects the stories of war which have currency in the society.

War stories tell of the past. War plans speak to the future. But each involves the elements of a story (characters, intentions, actions, plight, outcomes).

Leadership asks 'what kind of situation is this?' and 'how can we best advance our aims while suitably safeguarding ourselves?' If war is seen as a danger, or an option, leaders will search for instruction among the accounts of war available to them. Having an account at hand does not say how it will be used. It might be cited to caution against one course of action, suggest another, point out dangers in a third, or offer yet another as likely to bring success. But accounts embody an episodic repertoire, and by working from these stories—by combination, alteration, and invention—novel possibilities are generated.

There is no way to undo the fact that destruction is easy. Even if we took well-designed political and social steps to reduce the likelihood of war, or lessen the violence of war, the Vulnerability Condition would remain true. War will continue to demand clear thought and prudent policy.

But what policy would prudently protect against war, without risking other unacceptable consequences? This question is addressed in Chapter 11. A judgment that war is 'unacceptable activity' and that the *process* by which particular wars are undertaken turns on war plans and purposive choice focuses the question of policy quite sharply. What do our points about *how* war is chosen imply for a war-avoidance policy?

*War is a choice made 'on purpose'*. So: individuals who choose war can—in principle—be held accountable.

The contrary view derives immunity from a collective need for shielded action. Immunity is said to serve a social purpose, for example,

when it protects corporate shareholders from suits directed at the company. Without immunity they would not take the risks of entrepreneurship. Are warmakers in a similar position? Does it serve an overriding social purpose to shield state officials behind sovereign immunity?

The terms of this issue—security, sovereignty, judgment, risk, chance—are well-appreciated. The justification for a shielded right to make war, and threaten war, rests on a claim that the ultimate security of the state and its people requires that officers of state not be *personally* accountable. (Of course, they are *politically* accountable; and if they lose, subject to the victor.) Still, the principle of individual accountability cannot be lightly cast aside. Societies construct social peace on that principle. The UN Charter rejects sovereign war, despite its drafters' gestures to self-help.

Before undertaking the Gulf War, the Coalition approached the Security Council for its consent. This suggests a principle very different from that of Nuremberg, or Bosnia. At Nuremberg and in Tokyo senior German and Japanese officials were charged *after the fact* with criminal conduct. Now it would appear that a voluntary coalition, preparing to use force in the name of global norms, should approach the Security Council before beginning to make war. On the Gulf precedent, an act of force, or threat of force, made *without prior consent* of the Security Council would be devoid of immunity. The individuals could be designated *outlaws*, in the old-fashioned sense, subject to seizure and delivery.

This is not how governments have chosen to position themselves, for governments retain a strong interest in rejecting personal accountability of their agents. The NATO air war against Serbia [1999] was not approved by the Security Council, and the competent tribunal judges that it did not constitute a war crime—because not directed at civilians.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it was a Charter violation, subject to political sanctions and therefore protected by the veto. On either theory individuals are freed from personal accountability.

*The war which ensues is never the war which was chosen.* Is war an instrument of policy? Not a prudent instrument, if its course is rarely subject to the mastery of those who spring it loose. War is not “a continuation of politics by other means.” The foe is to be coerced to do what he would not choose. War is deeply *anti-political*.

<sup>6</sup> *Washington Post*, 3 June 2000.

*Fighting triggered 'accidentally' would peter out if both parties chose not to go to war.* Even in the case of supposedly 'accidental' war, or 'war by mistake', each and every party has the chance to call a halt. If statesmanship is anything, it must mean being able to halt a war which no one wants. Failure to do so has all the color of intentional warmaking.

*If war is 'forced', it is only by one leadership upon another, and then by purposive choice.* Whatever the situation between two states may be—however vexed, or difficult—there are alternatives to war gambits and warmaking. This is true too of identities within a state.

*Leadership chooses a 'war plan', which it considers appropriate to the situation.* But what of 'prudent preparations for defense', which may anticipate fighting a war? Are 'defensive' plans—not only 'offensive' plans—best understood as war plans? Everyone knows that many 'defensive' means can be turned to aggressive ends.

In the modern world, where conduct is subject to scrutiny, there are real differences between preparations to defend and preparations for assault. Gorbachev recognized this, in a redirection of Soviet military policy before it was overtaken by the collapse of the Soviet state. The United States, Russia, and all in between recognized this in the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, now ratified and in effect. So if 'war plans' are understood broadly, their *content* matters. And individual leaders may be *accountable* for that content.

*A 'war plan' has the shape of a 'war story', and its content reflects war stories current in society.* Following our previous remarks, it could be a story to exhaust alternatives to force. But what if it is not? Is war glorified? Is it said to be 'necessary' and 'inevitable'? Given the currency of war stories, are there counterstories which need to be told? What of the results of war? The destruction of Hiroshima? Social costs?

*War stories not only suggest what action is 'appropriate', but also contain the raw stuff from which war plans, large and small, are generated.* For those willing to listen, they also carry warning messages: possibilities of depletion and exhaustion, of unintended consequences, of effective opposition. How thoroughly and candidly do war planners address the risks? The question is not only 'how can we win?' but also 'are we prepared to bear the unwanted costs of this gambit?'

*Risk and Uncertainty*

Leaders deciding for large states, contemplating attack on the small and weak, anticipate little risk from the unexpected: Reagan in Grenada, Bush in Panama. But they have been surprised: America's Vietnam and the Soviet Union's Afghanistan, and Russia's Chechnya.

When the initiator does not have overwhelming advantage, the choice of war is fraught with uncertainty. After all, it is an estimate of 'risks' that leads otherwise peaceful states to arm and drill in the first place. When such a state considers starting a war, it is usually because its leaders see its position growing more difficult, becoming more doubtful. It is beset by increasing 'risk'.

It is almost a truism that leaders who foresee a secure and stable future will have little reason to make war. Their economic plans also require confidence in the future. Complex modern states seek stabilities, weaving a fabric of mutual undertakings with other states. Difference and contention are anticipated and arrangements put in place to mitigate their effects. Engaged politics and habits of pacific settlement enable them to manage disputes without resort to war. Even these preconditions cannot guarantee, however, against committed 'will to war'. Not all states are ready participants in stability regimes. Not every possible dispute can be foreseen, and governments willing to settle may be turned out of office and replaced by governments unwilling to do so. Desiring stability, even being generous in one's definition of 'acceptable terms', does not guarantee that others will choose, or even tolerate, stability on those terms.

As the Cold War attests, uncertainty and ambiguity do not always lead to war. Well-chosen, they may even facilitate war avoidance. The tack taken in this study has it, however, that a leadership's experience in managing and reducing ambiguity and uncertainty—and the currency of stories about how to do so—makes a difference when the state faces an assertive challenger. How does it respond to provocation? Can it employ deterrent moves without making matters worse? Has it effective means to involve third parties? Does it keep looking for mutual advantage with its putative adversary? These are questions which could be asked in a conventional inquiry. But we would also ask: what past episodes are 'known to everyone' and cited as relevant? What cases, historical and hypothetical, do they study? What stories do I want them to tell about me, and how can I bring that about?

*Centrality of Internal Politics*

Not only is war chosen ‘on purpose’, but—an important corollary—it springs from *within* the state. Internal wars and civil wars aside, war seems to be interstate conflict. It is usually spoken of in that way. But almost always the substantive origins of a war lie *within* one or both of the combatant states. Internal political life sets career and factional problems for leaders. It pits ‘outs’ against ‘ins’, as in Japan in the 1930s. It creates incentives to use force when force is easy, and to prepare force when it is not. A voice is raised to change the political and economic environment, or a leadership imagines some advantage in a foreign adventure. Consider the prime wars of the twentieth century (WWI, WWII in Europe and the Pacific, Chinese Civil War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, ex-Yugoslav Wars), all of which—even WWI in its Austrian origins—are rooted in internal conflict or—as in Germany and Iraq—internal autocracy. The more circumscribed wars of the 1990s (Nagorno-Karabakh, the Caucasus, East Timor, Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia-Eritrea, India-Pakistan) are internal wars or consequences of earlier national division.

War is always ‘about’ something, which may of course be an ‘international dispute’, such as a border dispute, or a wish by one state to assert political control over another. Rarely, however, is that the whole matter. There are both *autonomous internal sources* and *internally-implicated purposes*. The sequence begins when someone defines a plight or possibility and declares assertive use of force the means to use. In internal political life that claim either circulates or dies. For example, at the height of the US-Iran ‘hostage crisis’ of 1979–81, William Safire in a published *New York Times* column described the relationship between the US and Iran as a ‘state of war’. But no one picked up that theme: there were no subsequent calls for war with Iran, and the idea died. But the explosion of the *Maine* in 1898 was interpreted as a hostile act by another New York newspaper propelling the United States into war. External events do not willy-nilly compel actions by a nation’s leaders. Contesting political parties debate ‘foreign policy’ and ‘defense’. And since no episode springs out of the blue, the process of negotiating understandings among the politically concerned, and sharpening contraries, will have been going on for a long time. In this way internal politics gains its decisive position not only in ‘how’ decisions will be made, but in ‘what’ will be judged right action.

Interpretations are shared through stories: stories of past wars, of once-upon-a-time heroes, of invasion and slaughter, of military prowess, of powerful machines and undefeatable armies, of tragedy and glory. Therefore the question to ask about places where war is a possibility is ‘what stories—especially stories that war is right and necessary, and the prospective enemy evil and contrary—are widely shared?’

*Regardless of Stories, War Remains Subject to Choice*

The stories which circulate do not force leaders to choose war, but they do shape whether war will be considered ‘appropriate’. War is a cultural performance, not a gravitational experiment or the unmediated act of a raw psyche, so an understanding of war requires an appreciation of the culture which makes war possible. A culture forms and lives through the exchanges in which its members engage. Concerning war, these are interpretations, in the form of accounts (‘stories’). The locus of the politically most salient exchange of interpretations is the point at which the authoritative decision to war takes place—or war is proposed and rejected. Decision and choice are discussed in Chapter 7.





## 2 Storylines

### Metaphor, Folk-Tale, and Narrative

Stories carry war projects. They conserve a repertoire of interpreted episodes. Inside institutions, they tell of past triumphs and defeats, expectations and disappointments, methods and mysteries. From the repertoire of available stories—personal experience, cultural fragments, institutional memories, colleagues' reminders, histories—modern political strategists construct options for action, for contingent precaution, for gathering intelligence. Each of their plans is itself a story. Plans, we argue, are stories for the future, proposals to project an episodic and sequential structure onto a map of uncertainty. Authoritative decision commits the state—at least for a moment—to a 'course of action'.

If politics is about the interpretation, drafting, and choosing of stories, as we claim here, then we could enrich our resources for understanding politics by looking at discussions of stories and story-making. What light, then, might students of literature, of narrative accounts, of fiction, even of story-telling itself bring to our understanding of war and war choices? Do the structures they discern in narratives suggest recurrent features of war? Would their claims for structure, recurrence, experience as a universal source, or the pervasiveness of metaphor lead to accounts which are 'conceptual' or even 'theoretical' for an understanding of war? Do their discussions of narratives pose questions, or adopt approaches, which could enrich our understanding of war stories as 'fictions required by the need to talk' and war plans as 'fictions required by the need to act'?

Accounts of wars are 'stories', akin to other kinds of stories. People know wars through the accounts given of them, but there are many accounts of any war and no procedure to identify a master account. But if

the form through which understanding of war must pass is the story, then students of story may have something to teach about the material on which understanding war relies.

This chapter introduces several accounts of stories, of different kinds, by authors [Vladimir Propp, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Paul Chilton, Kenneth Burke, Hayden White, Victor Turner] all of whom have a more than passing interest in war and whose insights bear on the ‘war stories’ problem. Because they are consciously concerned with language, getting their views right requires looking closely at just what they say. Where extended quotes appear in this chapter, the purpose is to ensure that the reader has direct access to the author’s choice of terms and arguments.

We will consider the folktale, metaphor and other rhetorical devices, and narrative—as windows on accounts of certain kinds—and introduce some comments on constitutive acts by which stories make social and cultural facts.

### *The Folk-Tale*

We take as our starting-point the claim of linguist George Lakoff that “the fairy tale of the just war” lay at the heart of US moral justification of its acts in the Gulf War:

#### THE FAIRY TALE OF THE JUST WAR

Cast of characters: A villain, a victim, and a hero. The victim and the hero may be the same person.

The scenario: A crime is committed by the villain against an innocent victim (typically an assault, theft, or kidnapping). The offense occurs due to an imbalance of power and creates a moral imbalance. The hero either gathers helpers or decides to go it alone. The hero makes sacrifices; he undergoes difficulties, typically making an arduous heroic journey, sometimes across the sea to a treacherous terrain. The villain is inherently evil, perhaps even a monster, and thus reasoning with him is out of the question. The hero is left with no choice but to engage the villain in battle. The hero defeats the villain and rescues the victim. The moral balance is restored. Victory is achieved. The hero, who always acts honorably, has proved his manhood and achieved glory. The sacrifice was worthwhile. The hero receives acclaim, along with the gratitude of the victim and the community.

The fairy tale has an asymmetry built into it. The hero is moral and courageous, while the villain is amoral and vicious. The hero is rational, but though the villain may be cunning and calculating, he cannot be reasoned with. Heroes thus cannot negotiate with villains; they must defeat them. The enemy-as-demon metaphor

arises as a consequence of the fact that we understand what a just war is in terms of this fairy tale.<sup>1</sup>

Lakoff echoes the classic discussion of structure and recurrent pattern in folktales, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.<sup>2</sup> Propp argues that actions and functions are recurrent, even though the characters may be very different from one tale to the next: the number of functions is "startlingly small." Moreover, he asserts that "the sequence of functions is always identical."

The functions identified by Propp are diverse and general. One could object that any salient and contested issue in foreign affairs would appear to fit Propp's categories, but that only argues that they capture recurrent patterns. We can extend Lakoff's treatment by locating Gulf War events in Propp's categories. There are startling parallels. Bearing in mind that *The Morphology of the Folktale* first appeared in Russian in 1928, think of the Emir of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti royal family, enjoying oil prosperity, as you read Propp's discussion of the folktale:

The folktale further presents a sudden (yet not without a traceable form of preparation) emergence of misfortune. In connection with this, the initial situation gives a description of particular, often plainly stated prosperity to follow. For example, the king has a wonderful garden in which golden apples grow; the old men fondly love their Ivasecko, and so on. A particular form is agrarian prosperity: a peasant and his sons achieve a wonderful haying. One often encounters the description of sowing with excellent shoots. This prosperity naturally serves as a contrasting background, since misfortune already hovers invisibly over the heads of the happy family.<sup>3</sup>

Propp's list of functions includes detailed variants. Functions are found "in the order dictated by the folktale itself" but not all need be present.

Here we will set out Propp's functions noting some correspondences to the Gulf War. As the table shows, the comparison in no way contradicts Lakoff's main point: that the United States misrepresented what was at stake in the Gulf by bending the case to the 'fairy-tale' of

<sup>1</sup> George Lakoff, "Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf," *Viet Nam Generation Journal & Newsletter*, v 3 n 3 (November 1991). [http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Lakoff\\_Gulf\\_Metaphor\\_1.html](http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Lakoff_Gulf_Metaphor_1.html) [seen 7 June 2000].

<sup>2</sup> V. Propp, "Morphology of the Folktale," in *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Part III, v 24 n 4, October 1958, Publication 10 of the Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, pp. ix-134.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

US heroism and morality. But it also suggests a deep congruence between ‘story’ and a sequential, episodic understanding of particular wars.

#	PROPP’S FUNCTIONS	THE GULF WAR
I	ABSENCE. “One of the members of a family is absent from home.”	The West is preoccupied with the Soviet transition.
II	INTERDICTION. “An interdiction is addressed to the hero.” <sup>4</sup>	Sadaam’s complaints against Kuwait were public, and no doubt the United States was warned about them.
III	VIOLATION. “An interdiction is violated.”	Despite the warnings, nothing is done.
IV	RECONNAISSANCE. “The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.”	Sadaam speaks with April Glaspie, US Ambassador in Baghdad, in an effort to divine US intentions.
V	DELIVERY. “The villain receives information about his victim.”	April Glaspie’s comments can be read that the United States will not effectively oppose seizure of Kuwait.
VI	FRAUD. “The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings.”	Baghdad makes representations to Arab states that Iraq would not invade.
VII	COMPLICITY. “The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy.”	Kuwait assumes Iraq will not invade.

Propp terms the first seven functions “preparatory.” Then “the plot is begun by an act of villainy.” He identifies nineteen forms of villainy, including abduction, effecting “a sudden disappearance,” threatening cannibalism, or simply declaring war.

VIII	VILLAINY. “The victim causes harm or injury to one member of a family.”	Iraq seizes Kuwait.
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The hero is connected to the tale and the defining act of villainy. This step Propp calls “mediation.”

IX	MEDIATION. “Misfortune or shortage is made known: the hero is either approached with a request and responds to it of his own accord, or is commanded and dispatched.”	The United States is called on to free Kuwait.
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<sup>4</sup> The interdiction may, for example, be a cautionary warning from a parent. Did the United States caution Kuwait to halt acts which Iraq could reasonably term provocative?

So the hero enters: a “seeker” (if not one of the victims, in which case a “victim-hero”). Propp stipulates four possible forms for a “seeker” hero, of which the third corresponds most closely with US engagement in the Gulf:

3. The hero departs from home ... In this instance the initiative for departure is often taken by the hero himself, apart from a sender or dispatcher. Parents bestow their blessing. The hero sometimes does not explain his genuine aims for leaving: he may, for example, ask for permission to go out walking, while, actually, intending to set off for a fight.<sup>5</sup>

X	BEGINNING COUNTERACTION. “The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction.”	“This shall not stand.”
XI	DEPARTURE. “The hero leaves home.”	The US deployment begins.

At this point enter the Donor.

At this juncture a new character enters the folktale: this personage might be termed the “donor,” or, more precisely, the provider. Usually he is encountered accidentally, in the forest, along the roadway, etc. ... It is from him that the seeker-hero obtains some means (usually magical) to be used in the eventual liquidation of misfortune.<sup>6</sup>

XII	THE FIRST FUNCTION OF THE DONOR. “The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. in preparation for receiving either a magical agent or helper.”	Is this Saudi Arabia, granting rights to stage from Saudi territory? Negotiations with prospective coalition partners? Interrogation in the Security Council?
XIII	THE HERO’S REACTION. “The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor.”	Bush keeps the coalition together, but is persuaded he cannot be sure to sustain the troops in the field under the ordeal of Saudi conditions.

Propp lists ten ways in which this might be done, the first of which is that the hero sustains (or does not sustain) an ordeal.

XIV	PROVISION, OR RECEIPT, OF A MAGICAL AGENT. “A magical agent at the disposal of the hero.”	Satellite imagery. AWACS firing coordination. Smart bombs. Tomahawk cruise missiles which could be directed to a given point.
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Among magical agents are “objects out of which help appears” (such as a fire kindler containing a steed) or an object with magic qualities.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

XXV	XV. SPATIAL TRANSLOCATION BETWEEN TWO KINGDOMS, GUIDANCE. "The hero is transferred, reaches, or is led to the whereabouts of an object of search." In one variant the hero "walks following bloody tracks ... The hero defeats the inhabitant of a forest hut who runs away, hiding himself under a stone. Following his tracks the hero finds the way into another kingdom."	Coalition forces, relying on armored units, position themselves for the attack.
XXVI	STRUGGLE. "The hero and the villain join in direct combat."	War.
XXVII	BRANDING, MARKING. "The hero is branded."	Iraq attacks US and Saudi forces in Saudi Arabia, killing US personnel.
XXVIII	VICTORY. "The villain is defeated."	Iraqi forces are overwhelmed.
XXIX	ELIMINATION. "The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated."	Kuwait is restored to the Emir.
XX	RETURN. "The hero returns."	Bush visits Kuwait.
XXI	PURSUIT, CHASE. The hero is pursued.	Alleged plot on Bush's life while visiting Kuwait.
XXII	RESCUE. "The hero is rescued from pursuit." In one variant "he avoids an attempt on his life."	Bush is safe.

A number of other functions of *dramatis personae* follow.

XXIII	UNRECOGNIZED ARRIVAL. "The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country."	Bush returns to the United States, no longer adulated for victory.
XXIV	UNFOUNDED CLAIMS. "A false hero presents unfounded claims."	Sadaam Hussein claims to be in the right.
XXV	DIFFICULT TASK. "A difficult task is proposed to the hero."	To counter Sadaam? To protect aid workers in Somalia?
XXVI	SOLUTION. "The task is resolved."	
XXVII	RECOGNITION. "The hero is recognized."	
XXVIII	EXPOSURE. "The false hero or villain is exposed."	The record of Sadaam's pursuit of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons becomes known.
XXIX	TRANSFIGURATION. "The hero is given a new appearance."	And Bush, as a result, is seen not just to have taken on the invader of Kuwait but the developer of more serious threats.

The series concludes with functions which see the villain meet his due, and the hero doubly rewarded, with marriage and a crown. Virtue triumphs:

XXX	PUNISHMENT. “The villain is punished.”	The UN Security Council imposes a program of sanctions. It creates the UN Special Commission to locate and destroy Iraqi programs to develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and longer-range missiles.
XXXI	WEDDING. “The hero is married and ascends the throne.”	Bush wins the fair maiden of public acclaim, and anticipates invincibility in the Presidential campaign of 1992.

Does this table evidence the ‘parallels’ we promised at the outset? Should we be curious why such correspondences could be so easily assembled? Or is it nothing but a series of plausible but meaningless coincidences, akin to a psychic’s ‘insights’? After all, Propp was not purporting to discern a general schema of lived lives, but only the structure of the folk-tale.

A first response is that need and aid, threat and (if not avoidance) rebuff, have been part of human experience from the beginning. Threat launches episode. The threat is not welcomed, so its agent is villain. And taking on a non-obligatory risk—whether for reputation, or gain, or thrill—must always have placed those who did so above others, and excited story-tellers and audiences. In a society bred to war, of course, one which pursued plunder for its own sake, the stories might be different. But we cannot be surprised by a strong correspondence between the stories of those who live a settled existence and war undertaken—or so it was said—to right a sudden wrong. Our understanding of wars—of particular wars, and of wars in general—is formed through stories, of which the folk-tale is a prototype.

The key point to the folk-tale is the villain and the variety of villainies. It is not difficult to see the stuff of the wars of this century, and the Cold War, in Propp’s catalogue of villainies:

1	<i>Abduction.</i> The villain abducts a person.	Serbia? charged with mass abductions in Kosovo [1999]. [Only some are evidenced.]
2	<i>Theft.</i> The villain steals a magic agent.	The Rosenberg case: the charge—now confirmed—that the Soviet Union had ‘stolen nuclear secrets’.
2a	<i>Seizure.</i> The villain seizes a magical helper.	
3	<i>Plunder.</i> The villain plunders or spoils the crop.	‘Scorched earth’ policies. The Kuwaiti oil fields.
4	<i>Theft.</i> The villain steals the daylight.	‘When the lights go on again, all over the world’.

5	<i>Theft.</i> The villain steals an object [of any kind].	
6	<i>Injury.</i> The villain causes bodily injury.	
7	<i>Disappearance.</i> The villain effects a sudden disappearance.	
8	<i>Demand or trickery.</i> The villain demands or tricks his victim.	The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia [1914].
9	<i>Expulsion.</i> The villain expels someone.	The expulsion of the Jews from Germany. 'Ethnic cleansing'.
10	<i>Immerisation.</i> The villain orders someone thrown into the sea.	The Argentine 'dirty war' against the Left.
11	<i>Incantation.</i> The villain casts a spell upon someone or something.	
12	<i>Substitution.</i> The villain effects a substitution.	<i>The Manchurian Candidate.</i>
13	<i>Murder.</i> The villain orders a murder to be committed.	The US attempt to assassinate Qaddafi.
14	<i>Murder.</i> The villain commits murder. "This form is usually a component of other kinds of villainous acts or crimes and serves to intensify them."	Hiroshima.
15	<i>Incarceration.</i> The villain incarcerates, imprisons.	The concentration camps. The <i>gulag</i> .
16	<i>Forcible matrimony.</i> The villain threatens forcible matrimony.	Rape in war.
16a	<i>The same, among relatives.</i>	Rape in former Yugoslavia.
17	<i>Cannibalism.</i> The villain makes a threat of cannibalism.	
17a	<i>The same, among relatives.</i>	
18	<i>Nighttime torment.</i> The villain torments at night.	'Surprise attack'. Nighttime air raids.
19	<i>War.</i> The villain declares war. "The neighboring king declares war; similarly, a dragon brings a kingdom to ruin."	All war. Nuclear war.

• • • •

The unit from villainy to resolution is a "move" and, writes Propp, several moves can be combined in one folk-tale, in succession or woven together. But the main content always runs from villainy to dénouement:



Morphologically, a folktale may be termed any development out of villainy, or a lack, through intermediary functions to marriage, or to ... a reward, a gain, or the general liquidation of misfortune, a rescue from pursuit, etc. This type of development is termed by us as a move. Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move ...<sup>8</sup>

And there is regularity, Propp contends, in the succession of actions in a folktale of two or more moves.

What does this mean? Could it, for example, support a realist view of international politics: villainy's prime role confirmed? Probably not, since evil force yields, in the end, to moral superiority. Or that folktales—for the same reason that action adventure dominates television—serve their audience's fascination with evil and violence? Certainly villainy abounds and evil fascinates.

The more persuasive explanation is that the succession of events must in fact follow modal sequences, since in the world of practice some events are only possible after their natural precursors have taken place. Physical constraints can be abridged by magic and transmogrification, but failing to adhere to a 'logic of events' would compromise believability. The incredible adornments of the folk-tale—place, character, magic, monsters and demons—are deployed against a ground of anticipated sequence.<sup>9</sup> The folk-tale is a story, not a collage, not deafening and indecipherable clamor and roar, not an unintelligible

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83, omitting coding symbols.

<sup>9</sup> Mieke Bal describes the fabula—what in this work we call an episode—as “a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.” Bal then writes that

Most fabulas can be constructed according to the demands of human 'logic of events' provided that this concept is not too narrowly understood.

Otherwise they would not be comprehensible. According to Bal, what is true of elements of the fabula in a narrative text “should also be applicable to other connected series of human actions.” The fabula is akin to “‘real’ fabulas”: there is a relationship “between what people do and what actors do in a fabula that has been invented, between what people experience and what actors experience.” Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 5, 12–13.

In the second edition (1997), p. 7, Bal repeats the definition but then puts the matter of a “logic of events” just a little differently than in 1985:

The fabula, understood as material or content that is worked into a story, has been defined as a series of events. This series is constructed according to certain rules. We call this the *logic of events*. Structuralists often work from the assumption that the series of events that is presented in a story answers to the same rules as those controlling human behaviour, since a narrative text would otherwise be impossible to understand.

chaos. It is a story in which character passes through plight, good triumphs over evil, and the orderly preoccupations of life resume.

*Metaphor*

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson would have us understand that ARGUMENT IS WAR. Their claim for the centrality of metaphor returns recurrently to the *gestalts*—the term they choose—of argument and war. Of elemental experiences, from which through metaphor the more abstract are located and defined, war stands out as socially complex, an abstraction in itself. Lakoff and Johnson do not venture to find a yet more elemental *gestalt* congruent with war, but I am tempted to broach that WAR IS FIRE. They also explain that several elementals may be drawn on metaphorically to define a single category. Following their path, we would come upon WAR IS RAPE, WAR IS MADNESS, and WAR IS HELL. And in his discussion of US representations of the Gulf War, Lakoff suggests just such metaphors, alternative to Clausewitz’ familiar dictum, metaphors in which war is understood “only in its moral dimension”: WAR IS VIOLENT CRIME. The crimes include MURDER, ASSAULT, KID-NAPPING, ARSON, RAPE, AND THEFT.<sup>10</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson’s larger project is to offer an account of language, understanding, and meaning. They call their view *experientialism*. It rejects some tenets of objectivism, and some of subjectivism. Unlike the “objectivist myth,” their view is that we see the world through our interactions with it, and form categories from resulting “experiential *gestalts*.” Meaning is *not* inherent in objects. Metaphor is “pervasive” and central, a source of new meanings. As for the “subjectivist myth,” it is wrong in holding—among other things—that meanings have no natural structure and that the context, too, is unstructured. For Lakoff and Johnson, meaning always goes back to the *experiences* of the person who, in the world, interacts with that world in elemental ways, using elemental means. And those interactive experiences—of nature but also society and culture—structure experience itself, meaning, context, and understanding “*holistically in terms of experiential gestalts [which] have structure that is not arbitrary.*”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Lakoff, “Metaphor and War,” *above*.

<sup>11</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 210 ff. On ‘direct immediate understanding’ and the dimensions of ‘experiential *gestalts*,’ see p. 176.

They adopt a pragmatic test of truth claims. And because “human concepts” correspond to “interactional properties,” people may hold “very different conceptual systems” and so see truth quite differently.<sup>12</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that their view of understanding in society has important points of tangence with terms key to this study. We emphasize conversation as the elemental social act, episode as the vehicle for both accounts and plans, scripts, interpretation, negotiation (of meanings and projects), and war plans and the intentions which bring them forth. Lakoff and Johnson see conversation as structured action, sequential, following a certain cooperative script. Causation, they say, is itself an experiential *gestalt*, also—like truth—rooted in pragmatic success:

Our successful functioning in the world involves the application of the concept of causation to ever new domains of activity—through intention, planning, drawing inferences, etc. The concept is stable because we continue to function successfully in terms of it.

They summarize, drawing their ‘experientialist’ view together, and identify it with negotiated understandings:

Within the experientialist myth, understanding emerges from interaction, from constant negotiation with the environment and other people. It emerges in the following way: the nature of our bodies and our physical and cultural environment imposes a structure on our experience, in terms of natural dimensions of the sort we have discussed. Recurrent experience leads to the formation of categories, which are experiential *gestalts* with those natural dimensions. Such *gestalts* define coherence in our experience. We understand our experience directly when we see it as being structured coherently in terms of *gestalts* that have emerged directly from interaction with and in our environment. We understand experience metaphorically when we use a *gestalt* from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179 and 181:

We understand a statement as being true in a given situation when our understanding of the statement fits our understanding of the situation closely enough for our purposes ...

[H]uman concepts do not correspond to inherent properties of things but only to interactional properties. This is natural, since concepts can be metaphorical in nature and can vary from culture to culture ...

[P]eople with very different conceptual systems than our own may understand the world in a very different way than we do. Thus, they may have a very different body of truths than we have and even different criteria for truth and reality.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 230.

Lakoff's interest in the sources of understanding and their implication in language has a lucky result for students of war, because he has thought about war and brought his analytic to the Gulf War. He argues that common expressions about the war are metaphoric, and conceal important aspects of reality. Among the metaphors he identifies in Gulf War claims are

WAR IS POLITICS  
 WAR IS POLITICS PURSUED BY OTHER MEANS  
 THE STATE IS A PERSON  
 WELL-BEING IS WEALTH  
 RATIONALITY IS PROFIT-MAXIMIZATION  
 INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IS BUSINESS

*Chilton and Lakoff on International Relations Theory*

What Lakoff might conclude about theories of international relations need not be addressed speculatively, since he has collaborated with the British linguist Paul Chilton on a paper which takes up the subject explicitly. They focus on the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor:

In what is known as 'realism' and 'neo-realism' in the theory of international politics, person-states are viewed as consistent individuals who are rational decision-makers and who act accordingly. What counts as 'rational' is defined as maximizing economic and military self-interest.

'Realist' and 'neorealist' theorists, of whom the best known is Kenneth Waltz, make it a fundamental assumption that states have 'desires', an overarching desire to survive and commonly a desire to dominate.<sup>14</sup>

They note the realist use of "power as money" and "international politics as metaphorical microeconomics," and cite Waltz, who states plainly that "A political structure is akin to a field of forces in physics."

Finally, Chilton and Lakoff say the folk view is elaborated by theorists of international politics:

The state-as-person metaphor is part of our everyday conceptual system; it is part of a folk conceptualization of governments that is widespread. It has been adopted and expanded upon by expert theorists . . .

The folk view has a state-person replete with a personality, a community, a susceptibility to disease, a home, a tendency to get into fistfights, and a body that

<sup>14</sup> Paul Chilton and George Lakoff, "Foreign Policy by Metaphor," in Center for Research in Language Newsletter, University of California at San Diego. June 1989, v 3 n 5, 5-19. <http://www.crl.ucsd.edu/newsletter/3-5/Article1.html> [seen 7 June 2000].

can topple under force. It is the theorist who elaborates the metaphor, portraying the person-state as a rational actor trying to maximize his personal gains, who sees states as being like children going through inevitable stages of development, who defines health and maturity in economic terms, who sees competition as a game with a mathematical structure, who defines strength by counting warheads. It is the theorist who reifies states as objects within a mechanistic system, exerting force within a political space, subject to natural expansionary pressures, knocking over other objects as they expand unless the force they exert is countered by an equal and opposite force. And it is the theorist who claims that only a bipolar force is stable.

The theorist is typically American, sees himself as a hardnosed scientist, and calls his collection of metaphorical elaborations ‘realism’, a description of the natural functioning of states.<sup>15</sup>

• • • •

There is clearly much more going on in the work of Lakoff and Johnson than a simple figure of speech. By associating the figure of speech first with the *gestalt* of which it is a part, then with other *gestalts* of which it is also part, and even further with *gestalts* of which it is not a part but with which it is associated metaphorically, they create a grand, flexible, and yet demonstrable structure. Moreover—a fourth but concealed extension—by arguing that understanding of an object or an abstraction is never fully conveyed, but suggested with increasing texture and complexity by further metaphors, they leave open the door to representation without limit.

Their entire exercise, above all their consideration of war and their occupation with interpretive acts, suggests structure in accounts of wars and in the very language by which wars are planned. But are they explicit in this? Does their treatment extend to what we have called a *story*?

### *Structuring Experience*

The Lakoff and Johnson approach to ‘understanding’ is wholly homologous with our notion of ‘story’. “The dimensions in which we structure our experience (e.g. parts, stages, purposes) emerge naturally from our activity in the world.” The six ‘dimensions’ are participants, parts, stages, linear sequence, causation, and purpose. It is evident that ‘experience’ for them is experienced *episodically*, that it is experienced as a sequence and therefore can be rendered as a sequence. They make

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

this even clearer when they identify the source of the ‘meaning’ of an object in the way it is used, meaning which arises in part out of the context in which its use takes place.<sup>16</sup>

### *Planning*

We noted Lakoff and Johnson’s judgment on causation: “Our successful functioning in the world,” Lakoff and Johnson write, “involves the application of the concept of causation to ever new domains of activity—through intention, planning, drawing inferences, etc. The concept is stable because we continue to function successfully in terms of it.”<sup>17</sup> Its main interest for them is that it displays a

prototypical core ... DIRECT MANIPULATION [which] is not an unanalyzable semantic primitive but rather a gestalt consisting of properties that naturally occur together in our daily experience of performing direct manipulations.<sup>18</sup>

But a metaphor also can be “a guide for future action,” through which social realities are created. They cite the ‘energy crisis’ and use of the war metaphor to describe Carter Administration policy responses.

The metaphor was not merely a way of viewing reality; it constituted a license for policy change and political and economic action. The very acceptance of the metaphor provided grounds for certain inferences: there was an external, foreign, hostile enemy (pictured by cartoonists in Arab headdress) ...<sup>19</sup>

It is important, they insist, to realize that the war metaphor was not the only metaphor available. Other metaphors might have been employed. We can imagine framing the ‘energy crisis’ as a problem for household frugality, an environmental lesson, a spur to invention, or an opportunity to reflect on distributive justice, using suitable metaphors.

### *Burke’s Grammar of Motives*

“My primary concern,” writes Kenneth Burke, introducing his discussion of the Four Master Tropes, is “their rôle in the discovery and

<sup>16</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 119. They go on to say that “The kind of conceptual system we have is a product of the kind of beings we are and the way we interact with our physical and cultural environment.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

description of ‘the truth’.<sup>20</sup> The four are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony.<sup>21</sup>

We cite Burke for a limited purpose: to bring his insight to bear on the problem of ‘stories’, and stories of war. He is, after all, in pursuit of truth. The closest he carries us to his own view, exploring dialectic, is summed up in these words, developing a commentary on irony:

Irony arises when one tries ... to produce a *development* which uses all the terms. Hence, from the standpoint of this total form (this “perspective of perspectives”), none of the participating “sub-perspectives” can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong. They are all voices, or personalities, or positions, integrally affecting one another . . .

But insofar as terms are thus encouraged to participate in an orderly parliamentary development, the dialectic of this participation produces (in the observer who considers the whole from the standpoint of the participation of all the terms rather than from the standpoint of any one participant) a “resultant certainty” of a different quality, necessarily ironic, since it requires that all the sub-certainties be considered as neither true nor false, but *contributory* . . .<sup>22</sup>

Burke comments explicitly on theory. Consider

the widespread belief that the mathematico-quantitative ideal of the physical sciences can and should serve as the ideal of the “social sciences” [but a] *terminology of conceptual analysis, if it is not to lead to misrepresentation, must be constructed in conformity with a representative anecdote—whereas anecdotes “scientifically” selected for reductive purposes are not representative.*<sup>23</sup>

Burke is in quest of a grand representative anecdote. He illustrates his purpose by discussing synecdochic representation in a dramatic or dialectic development. “One character,” he writes, “may be taken as the summarizing vessel, or synecdochic representative, of the development

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1945), Appendix D, p. 503.

<sup>21</sup> Metaphor is “seeing something in terms of something else”; and its ‘literal’ counterpart is *perspective*. Metonymy conveys the intangible in terms of the tangible, as “the heart” for “the emotions”: its counterpart is *reduction*. Synecdoche gives the part for the whole, or whole for part, or thing for what it is made from, and so on; its counterpart is *representation*. And irony, Burke writes, “arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a *development* which uses all the terms”; in short, it does not work, but turns back upon itself; for example, only “by experiencing folly” could we get beyond folly; its counterpart is *dialectic*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 512–513.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 510. Emphasis in original. And at p. 328: “it is the strategy of atomism to reduce the complex to the simple, and the simple cannot be properly said to represent the complex.”

as a whole.” The examples he gives: Socrates in the Platonic dialogue, or “the proletariat [as] the Socrates of the Marxist Symposium of History.”

In seeking the “representative public enactment, to which all members of a given social body variously but commonly subscribe” he asks: will total war do?

Unfortunately, in the modern state, with its great diversity of interests and opinions, due to the dispersion of technological and commercial enterprise, the act that comes closest to the totality of tribal festivals and the agape is the act of war. But modern war (“total war”) itself is so complex, that we could hardly use it as our representative anecdote until we had selected some moment within war to serve in turn as representative of war. “Modern war in general” would be unwieldy as an anecdote, since it is more of a *confusion* than a *form*.

Our scruples about the tactics of beginnings suggested a still more serious objection. For if we took war as an anecdote, then in obeying the genius of this anecdote and shaping an idiom accordingly, we should be proclaiming war as the essence of human relations. And that choice is too drastic to be taken unless absolutely necessary.<sup>24</sup>

In undertaking a ‘grammar of motives’, Burke too, like Lakoff and Johnson after him, is concerned with “basic forms of thought,” but specifically those which are “exemplified in the attributing of motives.” It seems to be that the pursuit of motive will speak to the basic forms of thought. That they are “exemplified” in attributing motives is “in accordance with the nature of the world as all men necessarily experience it.” Lakoff and Johnson, too, argue from the nature of the world as all men experience it.

To say it briefly, Burke claims that any statement about motive will concern act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose: “what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose).”<sup>25</sup> Burke seeks, he emphasizes “*not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise.*”<sup>26</sup> And what follows is an exploring, an opening up of terms, exploiting juxtaposition and contraries. He does so in developing further the possibility of employing ‘total war’ as anecdote:

When there is much preparation being made *for* war, we might at least aim to prepare with equal zest *against* it. And war would be as much our idiom in the second case as in the first, except that in the second case war would not be used

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.



primarily as a *constitutive* anecdote but rather as an *admonitory* anecdote. That is, an anecdote shaped about war would be designed not so much for stating what mankind *substantially is* as for emphatically pointing out what mankind is *in danger of becoming*.<sup>27</sup>

Finally we should note Kenneth Burke's dedication of *A Grammar of Motives*, published in 1945, after the world's purification in fire:

*Ad bellum purificandum*

But by 1950 Burke was forced to recognize war in a new form, arising out of the ashes of the old, "polemic kinds of rhetoric (such as the verbal tactics now called 'cold war')." <sup>28</sup>

### *Narrative*

With Burke's notes about representation in mind, consider another set of questions about wars and war theory. What is the relationship between the events we believe to have been 'the war' and the stories we tell 'about the war'. What sort of story is a story of *historical* events? We can begin with Hayden White's challenge:

What is involved, then, in that finding of the "true story," that discovery of the "real story" within or behind the events that come to us in the chaotic form of "historical records"? What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified, by the fantasy that *real* events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story? In the enigma of this wish, this desire, we catch a glimpse of the cultural function of narrativizing discourse in general, an intimation of the psychological impulse behind the apparently universal need not only to narrate but to give to events an aspect of narrativity.<sup>29</sup>

His answer returns to terms already canvassed in other contexts. "The demand for closure in the historical story," White suggests, is a demand "for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a *moral* drama."<sup>30</sup> And he concludes:

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1950), p. xiv.

<sup>29</sup> Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in W. J. T. Mitchell, *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 1981), pp. 1–23, p. 4. The articles in this volume were originally published in *Critical Inquiry*, v 7 n1 (Autumn 1980) and v 7 n 4 (Summer 1981).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

I have sought to suggest that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary. The notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its origin in wishes, daydreams, reveries. Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see “the end” in every beginning? ... And does the world, even the social world, ever really come to us as already narrativized, already “speaking itself” from beyond the horizon of our capacity to make scientific sense of it? Or is the fiction of such a world, a world capable of speaking itself and of displaying itself as a form of a story, necessary for the establishment of that moral authority without which the notion of a specifically social reality would be unthinkable?<sup>31</sup>

Victor Turner—with White’s *Metahistory* and concern with story in hand—advances a quite different view, which he rests on the authority of anthropological observation and study. He puts center-stage the *social drama* in four phases: *breach*, *crisis*, *redress*, and either *reintegration* or *recognition of schism*.<sup>32</sup>

Although it might be argued that the social drama is a story in White’s sense, in that it has discernible inaugural, transitional, and terminal motifs, that is, a beginning, a middle, and an end, my observations convince me that it is, indeed, a spontaneous unit of social process and a fact of everyone’s experience in every human society. My hypothesis, based on repeated observations of such processual units in a range of sociocultural systems and on my reading in ethnography and history, is that social dramas, “dramas of living,” as Kenneth Burke calls them, can be aptly studied as having four phases. These I label breach, crisis, redress, and *either reintegration or recognition of schism*. Social dramas occur within groups of persons who share values and interests and who have a real or alleged common history. The main actors are persons for whom the group has a high value priority. Most of us have what I call our “star” group or groups to which we owe our deepest loyalty and whose fate is for us of the greatest personal concern. It is the one with which a person identifies most deeply and in which he finds fulfillment of his major social and personal desires.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. In the same volume, Louis O. Mink, “Everyman His or Her Own Analyst,” pp. 233–239, p. 239, grants several of White’s claims, but demurs from the claim that the motive for narrative is a need for a moral authority. White replies, pp. 249–254.

<sup>32</sup> Turner himself, of course, is very interested in folk-tales, and the ways in which tales retold come to frame participant’s accounts of social dramas in which they take part. But this did not seem the place to ask whether Turner’s categories correspond to the functions identified by Propp or, as seems likely, there are fruitful congruences between them but not strict correspondence.

<sup>33</sup> Victor Turner, “Social Dramas and Stories About Them,” in W. J. T. Mitchell [ed], *above*, pp. 137–164, p. 145. See also Turner’s *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*.

On the face of Turner's conditions, war between states would not be a 'social drama' in his sense. But he cites as an example of breach the Boston Tea Party, and as another the breach between the United States and Iran upon seizure of the US Embassy personnel in 1979: "During the phase of crisis, the pattern of current factional struggle within the relevant social group—be it village or world community—is exposed ..." So interstate war may fit. Certainly war in former Yugoslavia fits. And where 'social drama' occurs at any level

false friendship is winnowed from true communality of interests; the limits of consensus are reached and realized; real power emerges from behind the facade of authority.

Turner insists the social drama "is a well-nigh universal processual form" which "represents a perpetual challenge to all aspirations to perfection in social and political organization." Social dramas are largely "political processes" because they involve "competition for scarce ends—power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity—by particular means and by the utilization of resources that are also scarce—goods, territory, money, men and women." He develops and explains each phase, noting that legal and ritual procedures "generate *narratives*," and that meaning is found by "*looking back* over a temporal process: it is generated in the narrative constructed ..." And he, like Lakoff and Johnson, and Burke, makes a main place for indeterminacy:

[M]y basic social drama model is agonistic, rife with problem and conflict ... [T]his is not merely because it assumes that sociocultural systems are never logical systems or harmonious *gestalten* but are fraught with structural contradictions and norm-conflicts. The true opposition should not be defined in these "objectivized" terms for it lies between indeterminacy and all modes of determination. Indeterminacy is, so to speak, in the subjunctive mood, since it is that which is not yet settled, concluded, and known. It is all that may be, might be, could be, perhaps even should be. It is that which terrifies in the breach and crisis phases of a social drama.<sup>34</sup>

### *Conclusion*

There is a peculiar and powerful interplay between account and plan, between 'war stories' of events and 'war stories' which are designs for the future. In the view developed in this work, this interplay is driven by

<sup>34</sup> Turner, in Mitchell [ed], pp. 146–148, 153.

the need for decision. Fear, or greed, and the ‘need’ to act compel leaders to form a plan. Such a plan is necessarily speculative and subjunctive.

Each of the authors we have cited has made a different choice of what to ask and what to study, and their approaches—far from leaving us with closure—illustrate how many plausible and even persuasive stories we can tell. They are consistent with our understanding that theories have the qualities of stories. They confirm that view and prompt questions. Consider these issues which follow from thinking about our authors’ terms and arguments, and how we might respond to them:

- Is there a requirement that to be salient, to rise above the mundane trivia of daily life, an episode must be catalyzed by a threat or ‘breach’ upon the ‘arrival of the villain’? What effects would this have on ‘theories of war’?
- If our understanding of history is a social construct, and if there are many ‘revelatory’ stories that we might tell of an episode, what difference does it make in our understanding that we choose to tell one story of it rather than another?

Telling a *further* story, or a story implicitly *critical* of stories already in the repertoire, opens the possibility that ongoing interpretation will be richer. It can *refer back*, and it can *send on* elements. In any case, it opens a new opportunity for the listener to ask ‘shall I adopt this story as my own?’

Still, countless possible stories remain untold, and countless possible fragments unrecounted. Cultural studies remind us to look for omission. Is it systematic, explicable? How does (unavoidable) omission change what we would say about a war, or a group of wars?

- Is the very language with which we tell ‘historical’ stories a social construct? And if so, what difference does it make in our understanding that we tell our stories in some terms rather than others?

Not only are terms often metaphorical and compressive, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, but they are *loaded icons* which carry politically salient claims and pose the question ‘shall I adopt ...?’.

- Are stories given shape by requirements of human experience, in which some things must—for example—precede others? How does underlying causal sequence perceptible to us in our daily experiences, and the presence of intention among agents contributing to the flow of historical events, accord a ‘validity’ or ‘naturalness’ to selective stories of historical events? And if so, does this mark ‘war theory’ with claims concerning intentions, causes, and effects?

Claims to know, or reveal, causality do make for ‘believability’. The point of ‘war theory’ is not to reflect on the richness of the language with which war is discussed, or upon issues of ethical practice, but to offer practitioners *predictive success*: that is, the point of ‘war theory’ is to help practitioners avoid, use, and wage war in a world preoccupied with intervention and forcing or escaping outcomes. Therefore ‘war theory’ must be preoccupied with intentions, causes, and effects. To be competitive among candidates for predictive success it must claim to be able to show something about the interplay among capabilities, intentions, and outcomes which is not otherwise apparent ... and so its authors must purport to see rules or regularities relevant to a causal field.

To be ‘believable’—Jerome Bruner’s criterion<sup>35</sup>—stories must ‘ring true’ on many grounds. Perhaps part of that truth is in their episodic quality itself. The examples offered in this chapter are inherently episodic.

The authors we have cited confirm, in their distinct ways, the textured and confounding space into which practitioners have thrust themselves, but give little reason to believe the predictive project can be accomplished.

- Are the claims we have cited to perceive *structure*—Propp’s recurrent themes, Lakoff and Johnson’s insistence that understanding roots in experience, Turner’s ‘social dramas’—persuasive? Are these structures so *ruleful* that they contradict historical understanding itself as a social construct, or ‘war theories’ as stories?

<sup>35</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986).

Surely there are regularities in human affairs and social life—a natural world usually reliable, and a social world well-negotiated—with which our authors' distinct structures are fully consistent. They tell something about the framework within which historical understandings are constructed, but in no way contradict a central role accorded interpretation and constitution.

These thoughts point to conclusions along the following lines. There are reasons to consider some theories of war 'worth telling' and to consider adopting their claims as one's own. But these reasons do not include the argument that 'theories' offer predictive power, or are provably 'right'. Instead, a theory could prompt seeing an historical episode more richly, or anticipating a coming encounter with a greater sense of possibilities. These are not small accomplishments, and they would justify 'theoretical' work. Still, the accounts—even when labeled 'theories'—remain stories. Drawing on them to think or talk about war requires that their qualities *as stories* be kept in mind.

Whether engaged in a cooperative exercise, or one marked by hostility and conflict, one would of course want to know what 'theories' other parties took seriously. There the 'theories' would be *among* the stories which circulated among them and to which they referred in orienting themselves to the practical world. Other stories—for example, of past wrongs, or of weaknesses attributed to their enemies—could be just as important in understanding their position, even though such stories made no 'theoretical' claim.

## 3 Stories

Would we say that people are above all story-tellers, and story-listeners? People rely on stories for much of their understanding of the world. Choosing to make war requires talking about wars, past, imagined, and abstract. The only way to work through the possibility of war—pursuing ‘what is our situation?’ and ‘in this situation, should we make war?’—is to tell stories and make claims about what they mean.

In this chapter we draw on Herodotus and Thucydides for examples of stories about war. There is no special significance to choosing these authors rather than others, though it is convenient that both *The Persian Wars* and *The Peloponnesian War* are widely read and still provoke controversy. They offer a convenient way to introduce stories. In later chapters we will broaden and deepen our sense of the story as the source of both personal understanding and political decision.

A theme of this book is that *the exchange of accounts, their interpretation and negotiation*, is the elemental political act. Society rests on conversation. At its most basic, two people talk to each other, questioning when they do not understand, challenging when they disagree, negotiating—or at least acknowledging—their differences. As they do this, they invent new interpretations, speak some of them, adapt language to their needs. They may negotiate a project. Even without realizing it, they negotiate the very meaning of the terms they use. The accounts they exchange are, simply, stories. [In this text, to stress their ever-presence and universality, ‘account’ and ‘story’ are used interchangeably.] Society itself can be understood as a complex, surging, ongoing negotiation.

Men and women from the time they can talk are story-tellers. Their ability to make stories, to voice them, to interpret them, retell them, negotiate their meanings, contest them, and recall and reconsider them makes social and political life possible. As they exchange stories people

construct a common life. They design and undertake complementary projects. They establish distinctive and collective identities.

Identities imply ‘otherness’, which need not suggest hostility, but may. Earliest records and linguistic and archaeological evidence foster speculation that ‘others’ threatened insecurity, but the record is dim with time and uncertain. Many sitings of early habitation—on heights, in remotenesses, over lake shores, ringed or walled—appear ‘defensive’.<sup>1</sup> The early state raised armies and fought wars in the third millennium before the present, in the fourth, and less elaborately—without horse or chariot—in the fifth.<sup>2</sup>

Oral retelling preceded the recorded *Iliad*, and the oral tradition of the Norse sustained epic accounts before the sagas were set to script. Plausibly every pre-literate society capable of speech told and retold stories of threat, struggle, raiding, fighting, resistance, and glory. Studies of the folktale point in the same way.<sup>3</sup>

Herodotus’ *The Persian Wars* and Thucydides’ *The Peloponnesian War* were put into circulation almost two-and-a-half millennia ago.<sup>4</sup> In addition to telling about the wars themselves, these works incorporate stories of war, interpretations, arguments about interpretation, proposals to war, declarations of intent, debates whether to war, and war decisions. They tell of ambition and restraint, strategy and folly. But above all they tell us how participants were tellers and audience, interpreters of their time, and carriers of scripts for war.

### *Stories Which Keep Enmity Alive*

The Persians, according to Herodotus, traced hostility between Greeks and Persians to the Trojan War.<sup>5</sup> Some eight hundred years after Troy, Athens earned Darius’ attention when he was told (so ‘the story goes’, according to Herodotus) that Athens had supported the rebel city Miletus in seizing and burning Sardis:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gaston Bouthoul, *Traité de polémologie: Sociologie des guerres* (Paris: Éditions Payot, 1991), pp. 118–120.

<sup>2</sup> For a popular account see John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Hutchinson, 1993). Seymour Melman identifies the early army as the first ‘machine’.

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of Vladimir Propp’s inquiries in Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Books were in use in Athens 2400 years ago and had been for decades.

<sup>5</sup> Herodotus (Aubrey de Sélincourt [trans] and A. R. Burn [revision and intro]), *The Histories* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), pp. 41–42.



he asked who the Athenians were, and then, on being told, called for his bow. He took it, set an arrow on the string, shot it up into the air and cried: 'Grant, O God, that I may punish the Athenians'. Then he commanded one of his servants to repeat to him the words, 'Master, remember the Athenians', three times, whenever he sat down to dinner.<sup>6</sup>

guaranteeing that the story of Athens' action would not be forgotten.

Some stories name an enemy and tell about past perfidies and fighting. These are *enmity narratives*. Enmity narratives foster expectations that 'they' will be hostile in the present as they were in the past. If 'they' now appear to challenge or threaten, they probably intend harm.

Enmity narratives become even more compelling—and their currency ensured—when expectations of hostility are confirmed by events. In time Darius did meet the Athenians, encountering bloody defeat at Marathon. His anger became "even greater," he was "more than ever determined to make war on Greece." He did not live to carry out that plan, but bequeathed it to Xerxes.

Herodotus tells of Xerxes' council of war,<sup>7</sup> complete with verbatim texts which foreshadow Thucydides' re-creations of assemblies and congresses. The consequences of Persia's defeat by Athens are not automatic. The tangle of argument, pro and con, draws from wider concerns. But as Herodotus describes it, Xerxes is persuaded by a succession of accounts put before him—and a dream which ensues. The decision process is erratic, as fits autocracy in a time of superstition. But an attentive reading shows the stories put on the table, one by one.

Herodotus' text of the war council illustrates three themes which figure importantly when a people moves toward war. An *enmity narrative* supplies Athens' intent. Sardis is the negative example, an *evitar*. Another Sardis must be avoided. And the stakes are supreme: it is 'them or us'. This triplet—enmity narratives, one or several historical *evitars*, and a perceived threat to survival, clustered on the same 'enemy'—is a common precursor of war. [When the attacker is much stronger than its enemy, the first two suffice.]

*Enmity narratives* tell of bad times brought about by an enemy. They imply the same 'enemy' has an enduring hostile intent.

Stories do not necessarily make for war. Some counsel caution. In these pages, Herodotus has Artabanus attribute his initial pessimism to

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 443–452.

three “disasters” in living memory, pure evitars, and to “danger in insatiable desire,” which could only be read from cumulated stories of desire breeding danger.<sup>8</sup> These are *cautionary stories*.

Some would say the most extraordinary of cautionary tales is Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides reports all of these—enmity narratives, evitars, the extinction of cities, and even desire which issues in disaster. Like Herodotus, he is attuned to the expression of human emotion in policy. But he is also sensitive to—perhaps champion of—the virtue of reasoned restraint. *The Peloponnesian War* is a grand story, a vehicle for claims and accounts in the policy of war.

### *Stories to Learn From*

Thucydides wrote of the war between Peloponnesians and Athenians “believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it.” He sets the Peloponnesian War among historical wars. The theme he strikes is comparative. It does not strain Thucydides to say that he seeks insight in comparison of like cases, and believes that human affairs defy any simple account. How is the text to be judged? “I shall be content,” writes Thucydides,

if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it ...<sup>9</sup>

The contrary of an evitar is an *exemplar*. An exemplar is cited as an episode or event to be imitated, a standard by which present times are to be judged, the source of a claim to right and excellence. By Thucydides’ time, if we take his account of debates as substantively sound on this point, the commanding exemplars were the Persian Wars, in which Athens played a key role in turning back Darius and Xerxes.

Thucydides compared the events he told to those of the Persian Wars, which he judged “the greatest achievement of past times.”<sup>10</sup> How did he know of them? He was born around 455 BC, thirty-five years after Darius’ defeat at Marathon, and twenty-five years after Xerxes met the

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>9</sup> Thucydides, pp. 3, 14. Nor does he offer a simple account. James Boyd White observes that Thucydides’ object “is not to explain events but to make them problematic.” *When Words Lose Their Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 15.

Greeks at Salamis.<sup>11</sup> He could have spoken with those who fought in the war, though they would have been much older than he. Gavorse attributes to “ancient writers” the story that Thucydides as a youth heard Herodotus reciting from the Histories.<sup>12</sup>

Thucydides refers repeatedly to the Median War. Those who speak through him invoke it. It was surely alive in oral accounts. Several speakers justify their claims to rights by citing roles taken in fighting the Persians. Despite the many lesser wars which intervened between the Persians’ defeat in 480 BC and the first hostilities of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC, and the passing of those with first-hand experience of the war, the Persian Wars remained the measure of great war.

#### *Causal Stories in The Peloponnesian War*

All narratives carry causal claims concealed in their apparent innocence as accounts.<sup>13</sup> And readers, free to ask of the text what they will, press the quest for causes. Of any war, people want to know why it took place, how it started, who struck first, why differences could not be resolved some other way. Thucydides introduces the distinction between apparent and real causes, though—as arguments among close students of Athens show—the ‘real causes’ are themselves open to dispute.

At first glance—relying on Crawley’s widely-circulated English translation—the question of causes appears to be addressed unambiguously. There is a determinate starting-point: war was decided by vote [432 BC] in a meeting of Sparta’s allies, and hostilities began less than a year later. Moreover, in Thucydides’ distinguishing the “immediate” and the “real” cause of the Peloponnesian War, the immediate causes are “grounds of complaint and points of difference,” which are described in some detail.

<sup>11</sup> Gavorse [intro], in Thucydides, above, p. x. Marathon was fought 28 September 490 BC, Salamis 20 October 480 BC.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. xiv, locating the event at the Olympic Games. Lempriere recites that story, and says of Thucydides that “he found a model in Herodotus.” *Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary* (New York: Bracken, reprint 1984), p. 680. Elsewhere (p. 307) Lempriere dates Herodotus’ recitation at the Olympic Games to 445 BC.

<sup>13</sup> On “how situations come to be seen as caused by human actions and amenable to human intervention,” see Deborah A. Stone, “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas,” *Political Science Quarterly*, v 104 n 2, 1989, pp. 281–300: “political actors use narrative story lines and symbolic devices to manipulate so-called issue characteristics, all the while making it seem as though they are simply describing facts.” [p. 282]

Thucydides attributes the war to Athens' growing power, the "real cause" of the war; there was general fear and resentment of the Athenian empire.<sup>14</sup> Through speeches, Thucydides suggests Athens' growth was malignant, incessant in its requirement for ever-continuing expansion, an insatiable imperialism which carried Athens finally to crushing defeat in the Sicilian expedition [415 BC]. Against cautioning remarks by Nicias, chosen to lead, Alcibiades—"exceedingly ambitious of a command"—urges the expedition: "if we cease to rule others, we are in danger of being ruled ourselves."<sup>15</sup> War should be initiated against the weak [says Alcibiades] because otherwise they may strike first.

These passages give rise to the claim that Athens bears responsibility for the war. Was the war brought on by Athens, the result of her greed for wealth, prestige and power?

G. E. M. de Ste. Croix grants that Thucydides believed men seek to rule, but he disputes the conclusion that Athens was responsible for the war. Athens and Sparta feared each other. The Spartans saw themselves forced up against two bad choices, Athenian expansion or war.<sup>16</sup> When

<sup>14</sup> "The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable." Thucydides, p. 15. But this "real cause" was "the one which was formally most kept out of sight." The Warner translation renders them "causes of complaint" and the "real reason for the war." Rex Warner [trans.], *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Penguin, 1954, 1972), p. 49.

The good wishes of men made greatly for the Lacedaemonians, especially as they proclaimed themselves the liberators of Hellas. No private or public effort that could help them in speech or action was omitted ... So general was the indignation felt against Athens, whether by those who wished to escape from her empire, or were apprehensive of being absorbed by it.

Thucydides, pp. 88–89.

Consider Athens' free use of threats once war had begun. Often cited are her suppression of the revolt of Mytilene [427 BC] and the siege of Melos [416 BC].

<sup>15</sup> Though we cannot know whether this is Thucydides' view, or merely the instrumental argument of the opportunist Alcibiades, it spells out an imperialist policy. Thucydides, p. 349. Imperialism was understood. Recall that Herodotus attributes to Mardonius, whose ambition resonates in Alcibiades, the argument to Xerxes that by his punishing Athens "people will think twice in future before they invade your country." Herodotus, p. 442. And it was Xerxes who said "Retreat is no longer possible for either of us: if we do not inflict the wound, we shall assuredly receive it. All we possess will pass to the Greeks, or all they possess will pass to us." Herodotus, p. 449.

<sup>16</sup> G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 1.

We must now ask ourselves what Thucydides means when he says in I 23.6 that fear of the growth of Athenian power "compelled" (*anankasai*)

Athenians at Sparta invoke “fear, honour and interest” as motives of action in affairs of state, it is *Athens’ fear of Sparta*—not Sparta’s of Athens.<sup>17</sup> Complementary, reciprocal narratives of imminent threat circulated in fifth century Greece.

Thucydides has Athenians at Melos assert that men “rule wherever they can.” For de Ste. Croix this is a “compulsion” short of determinism “in the strict sense,” tracing Athens’ growing power to this natural proclivity of men.<sup>18</sup> Sparta’s fear is explained: Athens’ empire was expanding. But why did Athens fear Sparta? De St. Croix cites the record of recurrent Spartan thrusts at Athens in the preceding eighty years. Every twenty years or so Sparta had renewed the possibility of war. Thucydides’ readers would have known this history well.

Any number of causal stories could be told about an episode. Interpreting their current situation, as the speakers did in Athens, they invoke the past and anticipate the future. They do not always agree. There is space for multiple interpretations, differing claims about motive, speculations on consequences. An authentic debate takes place. The claims which gain credit grow in currency, converging on a handful of umbrella stories, often just two or three, those which are recurrently restated, following the main lines of cleavage.

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the Spartans to go to war—a famous statement which, being generally misinterpreted, has probably done more than any other single passage to create the current misconception of the Athenians as the aggressors in 432–1.

*Ibid.*, pp. 60–61. De Ste. Croix follows Lionel Pearson, who says that Thucydides “does not blame the Athenians here because he is not concerned with praise or blame ... but with the Spartan point of view” and quotes approvingly Jacqueline de Romilly’s judgment that “The war is the result of an imperialistic development of Athenian power, not the expression of an actual imperialistic ambition,” citing *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 18 n. 3.

<sup>17</sup> For their defense, insistence that Athens had preferred ‘tranquillity to war’, and classic discussions of ‘fear, honour, and interest’ and the Athenian empire, see Thucydides, pp. 43–44.

<sup>18</sup> De Ste. Croix, p. 62, develops the argument that Thucydides was “far from being a determinist, in the strict sense of the word” but did believe “human nature” drove men to pursue their interest. He invokes Thucydides’ famous attribution to the Athenians at Melos that “Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can.” Thucydides, p. 334. But he also insists that Thucydides “would not have denied that [human beings] have a real power of choice: a large part of his *History* is centered upon climactic moments at which great decisions have to be made and the issue sometimes remains in doubt until the end.”

How Thucydides' text has been treated over time illustrates that an episode can give rise to distinctly different causal stories: 'they acted from fear' or 'they acted from the drive for power'. Then, like all interpretive stories, those claims are themselves open to interpretation and dispute. De Ste. Croix' Thucydides is not a 'realist' Thucydides, despite agreement that men seek to rule.

*Restraint and Settlement Stories*

Athenians understood restraint and negotiated peace. However much the heroic was celebrated in Athenian culture, Thucydides never suggests that war or carnage was sought for its own sake. The Peloponnesian War itself marks the breakdown of the Thirty Years' Truce. Consider several examples.

- Pericles' Advice [432–1 BC]<sup>19</sup>

While charging that Sparta wants war, and insisting Athens should stand up to the threat, Pericles calls attention to the treaty provision that disputes go to "legal settlement." He refers to prior Spartan rejection of Athenian offers to arbitrate, and he includes as part of his package proposal that Athens is willing to pursue legal settlement and "shall not commence hostilities."

- Armistice Between Athens and Sparta [423 BC]<sup>20</sup>
- Peace of Nicias [421 BC]<sup>21</sup>

Spells out a fifty-year peace treaty. The text, as given in Thucydides, may have set the script of what a peace treaty requires, for the provisions anticipate those of peace treaties 2400 years later. The parties fix terms; they pledge not to fight; they stipulate by what acts the treaty is to be declared.

It was soon followed by the

<sup>19</sup> Thucydides, pp. 79, 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270 ff.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292 ff.

- Alliance of Sparta and Athens [421 BC]<sup>22</sup>

which lasted six years, followed by resumed hostilities and ultimately the expedition to Syracuse.

Negotiated settlement and warring stand in tension with each other: each of these agreements gave way to war. Moreover, where Thucydides ascribes motives, as in his description of the positions which were taken as parties moved to the Peace of Nicias, they coincide closely with interest. But these agreements also testify to a resistance to war, judging it not to be in the cities' interests, at least for a period of time. A six year and ten month respite was an achievement in itself. They also show that the cities 'knew how' to write a treaty of peace and solemnize it. Still, the tension between war and peace remains.

James Boyd White offers a quite different reading of Thucydides, which turns on the criteria of right action.

*James Boyd White and the 'Culture of Argument' in Thucydides*

White observes, as we have, that the Greek states had a highly-developed repertoire of diplomatic moves on which they could call. He puts special emphasis, however, on 'conventions of argument':

The actors in this world are related to each other in several overlapping and competing ways, each serving as a check on the other: through alliance, through colonial status, and through spheres of influence established by the greater states. In this way premises of equality and autonomy are both affirmed and qualified. These cities have a remarkably wide range of practices by which to manage their relations with each other: negotiated treaty, arbitration, appeal to the Delphic oracle, and, perhaps most important, the conventions of argument exhibited in the debates such as [the debate between Corcyra and Corinth at Athens].<sup>23</sup>

In exploring the "culture of argument" to which Thucydides introduces us, White asks—for example—why the speakers make the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 295–296. Victor Davis Hanson observes that Thucydides recommences the story, as the alliance gives way to war, with a 'second introduction.' It is as if Thucydides had thought the Peace of Nicias and the alliance marked a true end, that the war was over, only to see it resume. Hanson, "Introduction" in Strassler [ed], above, p. xiii.

<sup>23</sup> James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning*, above, pp. 64–65.

claims they do, and what kind of world is constituted by their speech. A professor of law, he considers at some length the speeches by Corcyra and Corinth at Athens, in which he discerns “a piece of a rhetorical universe, indeed, of a legal system.” He is especially drawn to the three types of appeals which speakers make: to justice, interest, and gratitude. Moreover, he discerns an organizing structure embracing the entire text, marked by a fatal departure from the centrality of justice. The turning point, in White’s judgment, is the debate on Mytilene. He claims that Diodotus, urging successfully for a measure of restraint in subduing Mytilene, not because doing so would be *just* but because it would be in Athens’ *interest*, launches Athens on the slope which leads inexorably to its downfall.

Up to a point the Greek cities had managed their relations, managed even their wars, conserving a community of discourse. But the *History*, according to White, tells that “this culture of argument deteriorated and finally collapsed.” It did so because “Athens and her empire presented a problem that the language of this community could not contain or manage.” The remainder of his essay addresses what there was about Athens which made this true. White concludes that

the experience this text offers its reader at its center is that of trying repeatedly to make sense of its events, first one way, then another, and always, in the end, failing.<sup>24</sup>

White is persuasive that debate created the social world in which the city-states stood before one another. He makes an elegant case that Athens, having abandoned justice, then paid the price for unrestrained interest. But it is not clear that this was the only way in which the drama could have unfolded.

As White himself points out, the story as told by Thucydides works against closure. Contradicting the image of Athens driven to war and self-destruction, the text tells of occasions when Athens could have halted. At two key junctures—when Cleon rejected peace after Pylos, and Alcibiades urged the Sicilian expedition—the Athenians made choices which proved disastrous. Neither choice was necessary, and each followed not from ‘interest’ well-understood, but surrender to demagoguery. And what if Pericles had survived the plague? Pericles argued for war, but also for restraint. Had he not been swept away early in the war, would its course have been the same?

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 87.



*Stories and Arguments*

The arguments which have drawn White's attention are deliberate, purposive arguments, typically those made before an assembly. They address the question 'what should we do?' What each speaker says is a text within the text. Speakers urge a policy, and offer reasons. White observes that the reasons are of different types, each reflecting a different criterion for choice. He singles out justice, interest, and gratitude as 'criteria'. While taking that approach enables him to contrast 'doing what is just' and 'doing what is in our interest', it obscures the fact that there are other reasons, and other criteria. For example, Nicias' concern that the Sicilian expedition would fail displays concern for *efficacy*: will this work? And it could also express the criterion of *extricability* or *forgiveness*, what in Washington parlance is called 'having an exit strategy': if this plan does not work, does it ensure a way out?

Practical concerns may seem of a different order than 'justice' or 'gratitude', or as merely one form of 'interest', but they express the pragmatic in a culture of argument. Thinking beyond Thucydides, speakers at a different time and place might appeal to quite different criteria, such as 'decency', 'honesty', 'honor', 'loyalty', 'riskiness', 'efficiency', 'altruism', and 'economy'. In fact, speakers at the onset of the Peloponnesian War repeatedly invoke loyalty to allies as their motive, and demand loyalty from colonies. They say they are keeping promises, and that others should do the same. And one could argue that White draws too clean a line between the early period of 'justice' and the later period of 'interest'. Did Athens decide to defend Corcyra—setting the greater war in motion—simply to ensure Corcyra against unjust aggression by Corinth? Or, as Thucydides suggests, did it show a practical concern, the coming of war 'just a matter of time', to prevent Corinth from seizing the Corcyran fleet and mobilizing both against Athens?

White perfectly succeeds, however, in posing the question how 'stories' are associated with 'arguments'. In the examples he discusses, arguments are recited as story-in-story; arguments, and even criteria, are *explicit*. The 'culture of argument' on which he focuses is a culture *among participants in the story*, among the historical actors who spoke and heard and discussed the arguments which Thucydides set down. [Of course, aware that Thucydides set down what he imagined the speakers ought to have said, a reader appreciates that we rely on Thucydides if we believe the event—participants, speeches, murmur of the crowd—ever

took place.] However we read this text, the images are clear: arguments in congress, ships drawn by oarsmen, great armies, cities betrayed.

*How Stories Matter*

White's exploration how a 'culture of argument' is revealed by arguments within a text illustrates one way to tease a richer story from narrative. White claims there is such a 'culture' and that it may be discerned, and offers reasons—examples from the texts—to persuade his reader that this is so.

Following White, we are interested in what sorts of arguments 'make sense' among citizens and officials considering war.

But we are also interested in how arguments are made, and what arguments are made. When war is the subject, medium and content—the story and its elements—are inseparably related. This is so because war is inherently sequential and episodic, as is diplomacy and maneuver prior to war, and concerns intent, cause, and efficacy. To 'make sense' arguments must be claims about intent, cause, and efficacy, affirmed by reference to experience, which in turn is available only in the form of stories.

It is useful to think of stories in three distinct ways: as wholes, as vessels for *explicit causal claims*, and as carriers of *implicit causal claims*. Even those voiced in the truncated, condensed form of slogans and characterizations ("surprise attack," "evil empire," "free world") imply causal episodes. In turn, *all causal claims imply stories*. If the effect is complex, any number of stories will be suggested. For example, to say "The Zimmermann telegram drove the United States into WWI" opens onto the possibility of accounts of Wilson, the Congress, the public, and their responses to the telegram. One story persuasively introducing a new 'cause' can give rise to manifold accounts of 'effects' as stories cascade. Each such story reproduces the 'cause'.

Each time the story is heard or read, it creates an occasion. We will refer several times in this work to the 'adoption test'. When a person hears a story, he or she asks, or may ask, "do I adopt this story as my own?" and "why?" Adopting a story as one's own admits many variations, apart from the obvious, such as adopting it provisionally, or as unlikely, or even as a story that is wrong but therefore useful for teaching. On hearing a story from another, one can go further, asking him why he makes the claims he does. One may challenge the story, as a

lie, or as mistaken, or incomplete. Two people may exchange challenges and reasons: they trade arguments. But in the end, to the extent a story is adopted “as one’s own,” it carries causal claims, as well as even more elemental claims concerning its subject-matter.

A story includes existence claims (since it must be *about* something or someone). It may use categoric terms (war, aggressor), implying that the terms are meaningful and that there are corresponding sets of similar objects. If they are not explicit, existence claims and categoric claims, as well as causal claims, declared purposes, and ostensible reasons for seeking those purposes will be *embedded* implicitly in the story. If “they hastened to arm” the story probably explains why they did so, or gives the reader hints from which to infer reasons. The story itself, in addition to its embodying arguments about particular effects, carries the weight of ‘why’ it came to the outcome of which it tells and ‘by what criteria’ it is to be evaluated.

Stories can be, and often are, fragmentary, incomplete and imperfect. They can rely for their force on matters unstated, such as what has gone before or the known context.

In this view, ‘theoretical’ or ‘conceptual’ arguments are nothing but stories told of abstractions and categoric objects. To assert a theory is just to tell a story. And so a theory carries with it the baggage of existence claims and categoric claims, as well as the causal claims in which its explanatory power resides, all deserving a skeptical and critical eye.



## 4 Intention

People are planners. We look to the horizon of our time. Michael E. Bratman terms us “planning creatures” whose intentions are parts of larger plans. They are “the building blocks of such plans; and plans are intentions writ large.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Does Intention Make for War?*

Are wars, then, simply choices which enact intention? This work argues that the *initiation* of war is a purposive, intentional act. And that is the key point, if the problem is to avert war. But in finding that the intuitive understanding is correct—that the judgment that people “make war” is also politically and analytically sound—it is important to respect the conditions which make war aversion hard to achieve in practice. One condition, noted above, is that destruction is easy. It is also a reason why war aversion is difficult, since the ease of exploiting threats doubtless encourages more people to think about undertaking war, and in more ways.

To be clearer about the relationship between intention and war, two conditions which surround war choices must be looked at more closely. One is widely-held belief that war “takes place” because of historical facts to which individual intention is subordinated. In this view, war’s “causes” are social and historical forces; the people who “start the war” are instruments of forces which animate them. This ancient issue contrasts free will and determinism: to what extent are human affairs governed by forces outside human hands? Is the intuitive sense that we make things happen an illusion? If one believes that leaders are merely

<sup>1</sup> Michael E. Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 8, acknowledging in turn Philip Temko.

instruments of their place and time, an analysis of war which centers on intention won't make much sense.<sup>2</sup>

The second question has to do with the complexity of large-scale human affairs: do our initiatives matter when so much depends on chance and the acts of others? This is not a determinist position, but it has some of the same effects: intention matters less. If the social world cannot be regulated by reason, then leaders who resort to war may not be 'responsible' for their choices. If they are just trying to do the best they can in a world of hazard and disorder, who could insist that they abandon force, or criticize them for using it?

The next few paragraphs sketch an approach to these issues. The aim is to suggest how intention—here, intention for war, and war plans—remains a reliable idea on which understanding can be based.

The problem is to acknowledge constraints on pure will, while conserving intention as a central idea. It is helpful in thinking through the scope of voluntarism to distinguish three distinct but connected spheres: material constraints, cultural facts, and the free regions of interpretation, design, and choice. There is no quarrel that material facts create opportunities and constraints; but it is rarely understood to what extent the seeming force of culture stems from material facts. What goes for 'society' and 'cultural belief' is typically a knotting or fabric of the material and the notional. So one move to conserve centrality of intention is to separate the firm material facts in 'society and culture' from the more plastic human constructs in which those facts are embedded.

This is not to say that cultural practices are not also self-reproducing. On the contrary, it is a main idea of this work that reinterpretation, reproduction, and recirculation of texts maintains *war scripts*. But the key term is *reinterpretation*, required because both context and interpreter are necessarily fresh. The result is novel, and not determined.

To speak at all of *war scripts*, however, requires some idea of similarity: that the new interpretations are enough like the old that they appear to perpetuate the past, that personal interpretations are enough like 'orthodox' interpretations that they seem shaped by prevailing opinion. Nothing in the approach taken in this work denies cultural reinforcement of common understandings. On the contrary, a reinforcing

<sup>2</sup> Gaston Bouthoul cites as an obstacle to the sociological study of war that "war appears to depend entirely on our will." Sociologists must consider whether conscious motivation is not in fact illusional. Gaston Bouthoul, *Traité de polémologie: Sociologie des guerres* (Paris: Éditions Payot, 1951), pp. 9–10.

dialectic unites the *complementary projects* in which social action is carried on and the stories through which projects are conceived and negotiated.

To create social facts it is necessary to enlist others and manage opposition, so that the creation of new social facts is not a free exercise, but it is an open one. People are free to create novel facts. Politics is the activity by which such possibilities are sought. So there are constraints, strict material constraints and negotiable social and cultural constraints, but in the region of freedom actors can design routes to navigate around those constraints.

The second question, whether actions actually shape outcomes, is also not a simple one. The case that action is inefficacious rests on several sound observations. The context of action is not fully known. Others will act. They may even try to stop or deflect actions they don't like. A leadership making war must expect others to resist, but cannot know where, when or how. The case for efficacy, ultimately more persuasive, is that every day individuals and groups create social facts which did not exist before. Without nuclear weapon programs there would be no nuclear weapons, nor the consequences their existence and deployment imply. But actors often must accept half a loaf, results *for a time*, or results where it is immune to resistance (as in establishing a national industry). Moreover, actors design paths to respond to resistance and unanticipated circumstance.

Intention does not assure success in war, but without intention to fight wars there would be no wars.

War texts, such as the speeches related in *The Peloponnesian War*, are distinguished by their *planfulness*. Athenians, and the 'Spartans and the Allies', debated what should be done. Planfulness is not something peculiar to war, but follows from the fact that people are intentional, purposive beings who design and undertake complex orchestrated actions to achieve future effects.

Thucydides recognized that war brings the unforeseen and demands improvisation. The effect is not to negate the role of good plans, but to underscore their importance.<sup>3</sup> Plans must be well-designed, but need not

<sup>3</sup> So Thucydides has the Spartan envoys say: "Indeed, sensible men are prudent enough ... to think that war, so far from staying within the limit to which a combatant may wish to confine it, will run the course that its chances prescribe." Thucydides, *op. cit.*, p. 218. And the Corinthians, urging Sparta to war: "war of all things proceeds least upon definite rules, but draws principally upon itself for contrivances to meet an emergency ... " [p. 68].

be detailed. Thucydides' speakers do not propose detailed plans; instead, they declare purposes, and weigh the means at their disposal. The resort to force is taken to require special justification. Necessity must be made out. Speakers assert the consequences should war, or some step in a war already underway, not be undertaken, and claim to perceive their enemy's intentions. War plans are a taken-for-granted topic of public debate in Thucydides' world. Much the same thing could be said of public debate about the use of force in the Gulf in 1990–91, or in Yugoslavia in 1992 or 1999.

*Why Are Intentions So Central?*

A great deal is at stake in the arguments about intention. If war 'breaks out'—if war is not a choice—then the point of study should be to find the circumstances in which war starts. Another objective of study would be to see how best to defend the state given a world in which war 'breaks out'. On the other hand, if war is a choice, then the point is to understand how governments and movements choose war and by what political means their leaderships could be brought to choose otherwise. The argument that war is a choice would be more plausible if it were associated with a persuasive theory of intention.

But that's not all. The argument that war is a choice also requires some device to connect personal intentions to choices for war by a state or movement. In this text, the link is authoritative decision. But even a way to make decisions does not guarantee that the decision-makers impose war on circumstance. Some say circumstance imposes war on the decision-makers. That is roughly speaking the view of those who hold that hidden social facts or dynamic social changes are the source of war. Decision-makers, they argue, are the unwitting agents of the situation in which they find themselves. If decision-makers insist on their own intentions—rather than admitting 'necessity' or pleading that war was 'the only thing to do'—they are engaged in self-delusion. A reader skeptical of our discussion of determinism, or willing to accept individual choice but believing 'power' and 'institutions' and 'custom' bind collective choice, would want a more persuasive account of the relationship between intention and collective choice.

Bratman's discussion of intention concerns individuals, but in social context. He proposes that intentions and plans play three roles. Each is necessary for effective action. They *coordinate one's personal agenda*,



*pose problems for deliberation, and support coordination of actions with partners.* Each matters because human beings are limited, limited in attention and resources.<sup>4</sup> Working with others is what makes people participants in groups: members can discuss their several intentions, and coordinate their actions.

Bratman identifies each step from forming an initial intention to acting upon it. He is concerned, too, about how one could say an intention or an action were “rational.” He identifies interplay among intention, non-deliberation, and deliberation, usefully enriching the idea of intention. Extrapolating from his view of individuals to consider groups in civil society, it is clear that people working together must also focus their agenda, pose problems, and coordinate with other groups. Bratman’s suggestions about personal deliberation can also be carried to groups. Even governments—or, better, the people in governments—distinguish policies which require deliberation from those which can be taken for granted.

### *Knowing Intentions*

The concept ‘intention’ is a bit awkward. On the one hand, it is a concept we cannot do without, since action to a future purpose requires intent. On the other hand, we know only our own intentions.

Consider this difficulty. We cannot know others’ intentions directly, but must rely on what people say—their declarations—and our inferences from their actions. Declared intentions are open to doubt whether, or to what extent, the declaration is ‘true’. Now consider observable actions. Even if a person ‘intends’ to bring about

<sup>4</sup> In his own words:

... given the demand for means-end coherence prior intentions not up for reconsideration frequently *pose problems* for further deliberation ... thereby establishing standards of *relevance* for options considered in deliberation. And they constrain solutions to these problems, providing a *filter of admissibility* for options. In these ways prior intentions and plans help make deliberation tractable for limited beings like us. They provide a clear, concrete purpose for deliberation, rather than merely a general injunction to do the best. And they help answer a question that tends to remain unasked within traditional decision theory, namely: where do decision problems come from?

Additionally “intentions and plans normally support coordination in part by providing support for expectations that they will be successfully executed.” Bratman, above, p. 37.

consequences by action, what we see remains ambiguous. Any attempt to infer intention from action runs the risk of mistake. The action may be ill-designed; there may be no available action which could lead to the desired effect; and we may be looking at unintended consequences of the action. Each of these gaps between the 'original intent' and the visible result creates a reason for observers to be tentative and wary in claiming they can infer intentions from the effects they see.

Despite the difficulties of this terrain, we appreciate that society and polity require that members assert and concert intentions. Policy requires common action. And common action necessarily requires purposive actions by individual men and women. Therefore no discussion of policy—and no discussion of war—can escape the need to accept the salience of intention, and the relationship between purpose and effects.

There is another issue. It follows from limitation that people must devote themselves to selected intentions, some among all the intentions they might have. Why do people adopt some specific intentions and ignore others or put them aside? One line of attack on this problem examines people's conceptions of efficacious actions, since choices among intentions must reflect some judgment about what can be achieved: we take this up in the next chapter. A second line of attack looks at learning, which we consider in Chapter 6.

## 5

## Effects

If war choices can lay any claim to rationality, they must assume some view about how the world works, how one set of social and cultural facts follows after an earlier one. One question asks: what would change if the world were undisturbed? Where does the momentum of the world lead? The second question asks the effects of intervention with a calculated purpose. What are the effects of an action? Call these the issues of *flow* and *act*. Intentions—the subject of the previous chapter—assume some understanding of both flow and act. They then assume a derived conception of the possible. Otherwise they are daydreams or wishes alone, not intentions to be achieved.

Choosing war implies judging that the flow, left to itself, would be less advantageous than the flow altered by the act of war. Otherwise the army should stay in barracks. And there is another line of argument. The flow is not immune from the unexpected, because it incorporates the actions of others. Then going to war, or preparing to go to war, is to anticipate their acts and what the effects would be. Strategy is the art of taking others' intentions into account, dodging their harms, and shaping their options to one's advantage. Analysts extrapolate the future from the present, estimate the course of the flow, and speculate on others' acts, but the result remains a guess, or an estimate. War choices require such judgments. Judgments about the flow, incorporating views about the possibility that others will take contrary or hostile steps, are part of "how one believes the world works."

Then part of the way the world works is that actors consider possible acts of others and hedge. War preparations are presented as precautions.

*"How Does the World Work?"*

Perhaps the world works by rules. Then the task would be to find them. However, as a striking table by Berenice A. Carroll and Clinton F.

Fink shows,<sup>1</sup> theoreticians of war have discerned many different worlds. Even among those who believe finding rules is the purpose of inquiry, some think the world is more ruleful, others less ruleful.

The world could be said to work through the interplay of ‘agents’ and ‘structures’. Then the task would be to identify them and show how they are related. ‘Structure’ encapsules how social relationships—society—constrain, guide and determine the agent’s opportunities. Although actors change society, taking an ‘agent-structure’ stance implies structures *static in the shorter-term* and therefore discoverable and persistent in their effects. Then the task is to find the rules of social relationships which constitute the ‘structure’. Some seek, too, rules of structural change over the longer term.

Although the quest for a codex of covering laws is largely discredited, the belief that human conduct—or ‘behavior’—is ruleful and therefore predictable remains strong, at least for large numbers in ‘similar’ situations, and relies on ‘probabilism’ to shelve non-conforming action, rescuing a dilute capacity to predict. This is not a bad approximation of what people do when they suddenly come on strangers in a new, but recognizable, situation. But it is a leap then to imagine that the policies and initiatives of governments—or political movements—are analogously constrained and predictable. In politics among governments, numbers are few, situations are singular, and similarities arising out of deliberate coordination and imitative expressions of interest should not be confused with similarities compelled by custom or structure.

Nonetheless, international studies, especially in the United States, has been dominated by academics who are persuaded that (a) their work is ‘scientific’ because (b) it seeks a ‘theory’—in one form, a unified, hierarchical structure of explanatory propositions, rooted in methodologically conscious empirical study, from which reliable deductions can be made, and that (c) the theory in turn yields questions, guiding research in the discipline. Because no such theory is absolutely hegemonic, ‘social scientists’ of international relations also (d) compare the relative explanatory and predictive power of alternative theories, by reference to the empirical world. Practitioners display ‘excellence’ by adopting such a program and contributing novel propositions and

<sup>1</sup> Berenice A. Carroll and Clinton F. Fink, “Theories of War Causation: A Matrix for Analysis,” in Martin A. Nettleship, R. Dalegivens and Anderson Nettleship [eds], *War, Its Causes and Correlates* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 55–70, esp. p. 63. The table locates authors and their theories of war on a voluntarism-determinism scale and by the dominant ‘level of analysis’.

demonstrations which thicken language and render the apparatus and its assumptions plausible to initiates.

Summaries of the field almost always begin by identifying ‘realism’, associated with Hans J. Morgenthau,<sup>2</sup> and ‘neo-realism’, identified with Kenneth Waltz,<sup>3</sup> as the principal post-WWII schools in the United States. Realism’s principal competition has come from liberalism and neo-liberal institutionalism.<sup>4</sup> Since about 1970 liberals and realists have competed on terrain identified as ‘international political economy’.<sup>5</sup> These mainstream schools have taken the state as their starting-point, and interest as their lodestar. Marxists, critical theorists, and some constructivists, insisting under these and other rubrics that society, identity, culture, and interpretive practices must be accorded a central role, have attacked the mainstream as sterile and self-justifying.<sup>6</sup> The scene is not without demonstrations of agility, however, as traditionalists scramble to measure themselves for new clothes.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> Barry Buzan, “The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski [eds], *International Theory: Positivism & Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 47–65. On contention between realism and institutionalism, see John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, v 19 n 3, Winter 1994/95, pp. 5–49, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al. [eds], *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 329–383; and Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” in *International Security*, v 20 n 1, Summer 1995, pp. 39–51, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al [eds], above, pp. 384–406.

<sup>5</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, “*International Organization* and the Study of World Politics,” in Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner [eds], *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 5–45, reproducing *International Organization* v 52 n 4, Autumn 1998, pp. 645–685; Stephen Krasner, “The Accomplishments of International Political Economy,” in Steve Smith et al. [eds], above, pp. 108–127.

<sup>6</sup> Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” in *International Security*, v 23 n 1, Summer 1998, pp. 171–200; Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski [eds], *International Theory: Positivism & Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil [eds], *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), pp. 47–64; Alexander E. Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” in *International Organization* v 41 n 3, Summer 1987, pp. 335–370; and John Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist

Of these schools, 'realism' and its 'neo-realist' expression have been foremost in their attention to war and war preparation, because of their central concerns with 'power' and 'security'. The state is central, global structures hierarchical, war and threat of war ever-present; states pursue interest, and the state's position is secured by economic and military power. Balancing alone—readiness to fight—keeps predators at bay. Even a critic of 'realism' would probably agree that the violence of the twentieth century can be interpreted to confirm many of realism's contentions and figures. States armed and acted provocatively; and others, watching, got ready for war.

It would be moderate to say, nonetheless, that realism makes no sense of the ongoing flow of events, and addresses—and so could explain—only a narrow selection of acts. The point here is not to trash 'realism', but to observe how powerful a story 'realist' claims have been. How can they have circulated so widely and been taken up and reproduced by so many experienced and thoughtful people?

*Any* systematic story can play a certain role. States do make and enforce strong claims on their citizens. They do pursue 'interests'—if their leaders can discern them. Having armies, states' leaders are tempted to gain by threatening their neighbors. They have done so; and they have gone further, attacking and invading their neighbors. In some instances, only military force has stopped them. Although the century will be remembered historically not for its wars but for its science and technology and its citizens' abuse of the world, to those who were touched by them the great dramas of the century have been world wars and civil wars and the Cold War. There are 'realist' narratives of all of these, and other 'realist' narratives for wars which were avoided only by 'realist' precaution. These will have a powerful grip on popular imagination even when long abandoned by policy-makers.

Language is enlarged by claims of similarity and difference: distinctions, categories, and even 'rules' contribute synthetic and analytic resources. This justifies, in part, the quest for rules. But of two very different approaches, one which puts the weight on finding rules, and the other which puts the weight on thick accounts, this study would choose the close historical and political narrative. That is consistent, of course, with the emphasis given to intention. Where intention matters, where individual decisions prompt the act, where a finer grain or resolution is

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Challenge," in *International Organization* v 52 n 4, Autumn 1998, pp. 855–885, reprinted in Katzenstein et al. [eds], above, pp. 215–245.

required than deterministic reliance on an assumed similarity can provide, only the closely-evidenced narrative can illuminate what took place.

The result is an account. Then what sense is to be made of claims to ‘rules’? What is the *status* of a ‘realist’ account? or a ‘neo-liberal’ account? The answer is very straightforward: accounts which claim, or rely upon, asserted rules or generalizations are stories like all other stories, interpretations of the episodes of which they claim to tell, and subject to the same treatment to which any other story would be subject. This extends to all theoretical claims about social action, certainly including claims about war and war causes.

Claims that war and war causes exhibit ruleful regularity are interpretive accounts like all other interpretive accounts.

The fundamental test applied to simple narratives is also applied to the most ambitious theoretical claims. Narrative answers are supplied to a two-part question: first, would I adopt this claim as my own? second, what account of reasons would I offer? The answers attach to the original claim.

So in this study ‘rules’ are set to one side by subsuming claims about ‘rules’ into stories. Much the same can be said of ‘structure’.

Stories themselves were introduced in the first chapter, but there is clearly much more about the notion of a story which must be developed. The next section, on the narrative and its elements, suggests a world in which people try to solve problems, given their circumstances, character, and the others who people the story. In this world of face-to-face situations, not unlike what is portrayed on stage, scale is small, character is intense, but mysteries of effect may remain unresolved.

*Apprehending the Social World Through Stories  
of the Problematique of Intention*

“People as story-tellers” and “people as planners” are evident when we tell stories of people with intentions. In fact, because intention is so pervasive in human affairs, almost all stories are such stories. It is no accident that military planning privileges “the intentions of the enemy.” Characters have plans. Then stories center on intentions because there is drama in whether or not intentions will be realized, and with what effects on the characters. Does the enemy intend—as enemies do in *The Peloponnesian War*—to seize our city, kill the men, and commit the

women and children to slavery? Will the enemy succeed?

Distinguishing the narrative mode from a logico-scientific or paradigmatic mode, Jerome Bruner writes that “*narrative deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions.*” There is intention, and no assurance its aims can be achieved.<sup>8</sup> The concept of intention itself may be ‘irreducible’: “intention is immediately and intuitively recognizable.”<sup>9</sup>

Bruner’s description of a story corresponds to the commonplace understanding of wars as departures from ordinary times.

[T]he fabula of story—its timeless underlying theme—seems to be a unity that incorporates at least three constituents. It contains a *plight* into which *characters* have fallen as a result of intentions that have gone awry either because of circumstances, of the “character of characters,” or most likely of the interaction between the two. And it requires an uneven distribution of underlying consciousness among the characters with respect to the plight. What gives the story its unity is the manner in which plight, characters, and consciousness interact to yield a structure that has a start, a development, and a “sense of an ending.” Whether it is sufficient to characterize this unified structure as *steady state, breach, crisis, redress* is difficult to know.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 17, calling this the least constraining characterization of a story. He distinguishes the *narrative mode* and *paradigmatic mode* [p. 13]:

The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads [unlike the paradigmatic mode which deals in general causes] to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts. It deals in human and human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course.

and the paradigmatic mode:

The paradigmatic mode, by contrast, seeks to transcend the particular by higher and higher reaching for abstraction, and in the end disclaims in principle any explanatory value at all where the particular is concerned ...

[It] deals in general causes, and in their establishment, and makes use of procedures to assure verifiable reference and to test for empirical truth. Its language is regulated by requirements of consistency and noncontradiction ...

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17. Compare “intention” attributed to a nation-state, as in the phrase, common to military studies, “capabilities and intentions.” Similarly, when Robert Jervis invokes the concept “intention,” with the meaning “the collection of actions the state will or would take” under given circumstances, he is writing by analogy to individual intention; but reaches the startling conclusion that “observers may know the actor’s intentions better than does the actor himself.” Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 48, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Bruner, above, p. 21.



*Causality in This Culture*

Among people who assume that causality penetrates all understanding 'how the world works', every effect must have a cause, or a set of causes. *Causal belief* runs deep in modern culture. It animates the search for 'war causes'. Even people who credit superstition or magic usually see the work of 'god' or 'magic' in effects. Perhaps this just represents the deep need to believe that there will be some orderly relationship between what a person sees and does, on the one hand, and what comes of it, on the other. A world which did not respect cause would be 'crazy'.

War stories are narrative texts. They turn on elements—events, actors, time, location. They display aspects—sequence, characters, space, information, focalization. The narrator provides clues to character, and suggests how story elements make for outcomes. Linearity is strong. "In a narrative text," writes Mieke Bal, "it is even possible to speak of a double linearity: that of the text, the series of sentences, and that of the fabula, the series of events."<sup>11</sup> For sequence to make sense outcomes must follow explicably from what goes before.

In war stories, sequences carry causal claims and implications. People easily imagine causality at work. In the ordinary everyday world actions do appear to have effects, and people act in the belief that they do. They assume a strongly causal world. Linearity in war narratives complements such expectations. If the war story also makes explicit causal claims, expectations of causality will be even stronger.

When people talk about events, their speech contains both express and tacit claims about intent, cause, performance, effect and further consequence. People's stories about events are causal stories. To live in the world we assume our capacity to bring about effects, and to live in the social world we assume our capacity to negotiate and undertake projects with observable results. And it is just as reasonable for us to believe that others do so as well. We reasonably believe that some effects would *not* have occurred if we had *not* acted as we did. That does not require us to conclude, as a matter of finding or conviction, that there exist discrete causal relations in all events which can be objects of

<sup>11</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narratives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 5, 12–13. Of course, the text need not take up events in the sequence of the fabula: anticipations and stories-within-the-story are part of story-telling.

discovery. On the contrary, this text takes the position that it is neither required nor helpful to imagine that the social universe is shot through by discrete discoverable ‘causes’. Observers ascribe ‘causes’, constituting useful fictions, and their acts of ascription and resultant texts are social facts and certainly discoverable. As students of praxis, we too talk in ‘causes’. So one can simultaneously doubt that discrete discoverable ‘causes’ exist in social affairs but also hold that ‘cause’ is a prime term in inquiry and social discussion and social negotiation.

A corollary of the agnostic position concerning discoverable ‘causes’ is that every interesting social episode remains open to novel accounts. Among all possible accounts many can ‘make sense’. But accounts only ‘make sense’ *to specific Readers*. So it is possible—and this is the ordinary case—that an episode evokes accounts which fail the test ‘would I adopt this account as my own?’ but still ‘make sense’ to others.<sup>12</sup>

Even if there exist ‘good reasons’ to discard some accounts as ‘inconsistent with fact’ or ‘far-fetched’, as long as some adopt the ‘far-fetched’ Reading as their own it may have social consequences. One man’s ‘boloney test’ [Carl Sagan] may exclude divine intervention in human affairs, but others will passionately believe that God governs events. Even in a modern secular state, there remains ample room for very different understandings of events to be believed. It is part of practical politics to navigate through a world in which others credit accounts one does not believe oneself.

The *plights* of which Bruner wrote always concern a *problematic outcome*, and therefore how the story will traverse the distance from its beginning to its end. What grips the reader’s attention is a dialectic between aims and obstacles, a dialectic played out against a backdrop of

<sup>12</sup> It does not follow, however, that all accounts are equally worthy. A discerning Reader requires of herself that she test candidate Readings against the ‘adoption test’: would I adopt this account as my own? and what account of reasons would I offer? When she asserts a claim, she invites the response ‘why do you say this?’ and when she then offers reasons she invites the further response ‘why do you consider those reasons relevant and guiding in this case?’

Although in principle the respondent might pursue ‘why?’ without end, conversationalists negotiate what constitute ‘adequate’ reasons for reasons. The practical need to talk and get on with it requires that ‘why?’ be pursued briefly if at all. In practice, stating a claim carries with it the message that ‘I believe I have adequate reasons to adopt this view as my own’ and partners typically accept that as a fact without further probe or challenge. These questions are pursued more fully in Chapter 10.

causal assumption, often to an ambiguous result. For example, the Irish people overwhelmingly favor peace in the North, but small armed groups, exploiting refusal and violence, repeatedly frustrated the popular preference. Indeed, the groups' accusations and counter-accusations centered precisely on maintaining the impasse. On a wider scale, nothing illustrates the problematique of war more profoundly than the real concerns in Europe, in the early years of WWII, that Germany would win; then by what actions could that be prevented?

War choices turn on assumptions about possible and probable effects. When people debate making war, their claims embody assumptions about the situation—including actors within it—and how outcomes come about. A *claim*, in this sense, is a statement such as “Iraq possesses chemical weapons,” “unfettered UNSCOM access to Iraqi sites is necessary to reveal any chemical weapons program”, or “chemical weapons such as sarin and VX are ‘weapons of mass destruction’.” The situations which give rise to claims may be quite complex, but the claims are of only three types: *factual claims*, *causal claims*, and *set similarity* [categoric] *claims*. Each is explained below.

By such claims people express their understanding of the world and how it works. They not only debate whether to launch war, but identify salient elements of the situation—such as commitments, individual and collective actors, capabilities, material constraints—and declare the causal expectations on which their policy preferences rest. Two further key points: first, they are likely to invoke previous experience, both to clarify the present situation and as a *causal yardstick*; second, even when war choice is not actively on the table, accounts of previous wars (and episodes within previous wars) incorporate these three types of claims, providing material which others authors can draw upon in debating policy.

There is nothing esoteric in this analysis. *Factual claims* are simply that. They assert the existence of elements (objects, people, dispositions, social institutions, and so forth) and even events: “There was a war in Europe from 1939 until 1945; and this is an account of that war.” *Causal claims*, more interestingly, usually have a double character, referring both to a specific case and to a category of adequately similar instances. “Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and so brought America into the war” is a specific claim; a more general one could take the form “if you attack a state, it will defend and revenge itself if it can.” Causal statements always have this form:

given circumstances C, action A {can | may | is likely to | will} lead to outcome O {where O may be a set of alternatives, or a range, or both}.

Then the point of *set similarity claims* or *categoric claims* is to say: *these* circumstances are an instance of circumstances C, or *this* action is an instance of action A, or *this* account of WWII is one of *many* accounts of WWII. In identifying this simple underlying structure, and reducing it to a simple schemata, no argument is being made that any ‘mathematical’ rigor can be achieved. Quite to the contrary, the argument here is that understanding of causality is lodged in specific episodes, interpreted selectively and represented narratively, and that every other point—is this a C? is this an A? does A ‘really’ bring about O?—concern contestable claims, intolerable in any formal logic.

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#### CLAIMS CARRIED BY STORIES—INCLUDING PLANS

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Factual Claims	Something or someone exists and has certain characteristics.
Causal Claims	That an action had an effect, or that it would. More generally: in circumstances C, if a given Actor performs action A it {can   may   is likely to   will} lead to outcome O {a specific outcome, or one in a range of outcomes}.
Similarity Claims	The object, circumstances, actor, action, or outcome in this case is ‘sufficiently similar’ to other instances of the object, circumstances ... that they can be talked about as a set.

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These claims make possible the focused argument around fictions, *fictions required by the need to act*, which we introduced in Chapter 1.

Then a plausible model of ‘how the world works’ is that people (sometimes acting in the name of states or movements) intervene in anticipation of results suggested by past experience. They rely on stories of the past for their expectations of the future. They assume that actions *can be* efficacious: that they can usefully tinker with the causal field. But have they ‘succeeded’? What happens is that after time passes new

stories are told which say “this is the outcome” [a factual claim], “it is a success” or “it is a failure” or “it is a case of significance S” [all set similarity claims], and “action A led to outcome O” or “action A did not lead to outcome O” and a “because.” A “because” consists of one or more of the three claims [factual, causal, and set similarity], and may assert a lapse or explanation: bad intelligence, unsound execution, unexpected resistance, wrong causal model. It does not matter that these accounts too are fictions, subject to contest; all that matters is that they are injected into the greater conversation to be drawn upon—perhaps—when the issue is revisited.

Much the same could be said of any policy proposal. When legislators champion a health care policy, or a family considers the best route for a weekend drive, their argument will be an arrangement of claims of these three types. Saying that, however, hints at an analytic problem. Perhaps facts, similarities, and causal expectations which work perfectly well in driving from Paris to Toulon are simply not *germane* when one stands on the brink of war. Perhaps, in what matters, the situation *is not* like, or *is not enough* like, the previous cases from which the causal yardstick is drawn. Perhaps the *inherent disorderliness* and *inescapable opposition* which mark war place too great a burden on the claims about links connecting actions to outcomes. Perhaps state leaders can bring about partial outcomes, but still fail to improvise effectively, and fail to draw together the whole fabric of outcomes which avoids defeat. There is danger that leaders contemplating war, or the threat of war, will do so with an unsound or inadequate model of praxis: that is, an understanding ‘how the world works’ which will be faulted in retrospect.<sup>13</sup>

### *Events and Effects*

Arguments about effects run throughout partisan contention. The broadest changes in the strategic setting, because they are in turn consequential themselves, and because reputations turn on how they came about, evoke powerful disagreement. And the issues cannot be resolved empirically. Disagreements like this illustrate, however, the difficulties in talking about effect.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Tuchman in *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Knopf, 1984) shows warmakers mired in misframed enterprise. For her ‘folly’ must be “perceived as counter-productive in its own time.” [p. 5.]

For example, consider Readings on the end of the Cold War. Ronald Reagan's advocates insist that US arms spending in the 1980s hastened the end of the Cold War, but many others believe that the Soviet Union disintegrated from within and that Reagan's arms spending weakened only the United States. Both explanations 'make sense': the causal connections on which they hinge are not dismissible on their face. Both appeal to general beliefs about public affairs which are widely held among practitioners and observers, and which are sufficiently complex to be largely immune from disproof.

This example suggests some of the reasons why more than one explanation can 'make sense', not only to different groups but even to an individual (who then finds it hard to choose when he sees that two accounts are incompatible):

- People's motives and intentions are never known with certainty. Therefore claims that a person acted *because of* another's move cannot be proven. And so such 'effects' of the move cannot be demonstrated.
- An 'event' does not lie in a single episode alone, but in as many episodes as storytellers choose to place it. They bound episodes in different ways (in time, space, among other events, and in the choice of participants), and make different choices about what else is 'in' the story and what is 'left out'.
- Discussion requires that explanations be concise. Because details are not spelled out, they will resist ready disconfirmation.
- Concise explanations often take the form of analogies to quite different bodies of experience, in which effects are supposed to be clear.<sup>14</sup> Because an explanation 'makes sense' in one sphere, people are disposed to believe it 'makes sense' in another.

Social relations—unlike mechanics—do not follow simple laws, but people require simplicity in order to grasp, interpret, speak, and choose.

### *Appropriate Actions*

But how do people identify actions appropriate to a given circumstance? Where do war choices come from?

<sup>14</sup> See discussion of the work of George Lakoff, Paul Chilton, and Mark Johnson, in Chapter 2.

They come in stories, because accounts tell how the world has worked in the past, and from the imaginative recombination of elements taken from stories. Some stories are general, such as the ‘balance of power’ story, interpretations in an abstract mode: that is a *script*. Others are stories about historical episodes; to the extent these are models to copy, they are *exemplars*, but they may also contain warnings of pitfalls to avoid, which are *evitars*. So these are stories about ‘cases like this’, and they are examples of what has worked and what has failed in the past. How stories are acquired is the subject of the next chapter.





## 6 Learning

How do we learn what to do? Given intentions and given understandings—many unarticulated—about how the world works, what should be done? What actions are possible? Which actions would serve best?

*“What’s the Appropriate Thing To Do?”*

Alfred Schutz offers a good starting-point, confronting this problem directly. Clarifying the relationship between intention and action, Schutz posits individuals choosing among “projects of action.” Schutz declares that his purpose is to analyze how “an actor in daily life determines his future conduct, after having considered several possible ways of action.” At the time of projecting the actor does not know what is known when the projected act is “materialized”:

projecting like any other anticipation carries along its empty horizons which will be filled in merely by the materialization of the anticipated event. This constitutes the intrinsic uncertainty of all forms of projecting.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Schutz, “Choosing Among Projects of Action,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, v XII n 2, December 1951, pp. 161–184.

Michael Shapiro, in his excursions into discursive practices and political understanding, finds Schutz’ emphasis on subjectivity “a highly psychologized perspective on action,” citing Schutz’ use of “mentalistic metaphors”; it is not surprising that he has elsewhere dismissed plans as “mentalist.” Michael Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 101.

Action, for Schutz, is used in the special sense of “human conduct as an ongoing process which is devised by the actor in advance, that is, which is based upon a preconceived project.” [p. 161] An overt action (distinguished from one covert, such as an “attempt to solve a scientific problem mentally”) is “always both projected and purposive.” And “All projecting consists in an anticipation of future conduct by way of phantasying ... In order to project my future action as it will roll on I have to place myself in my phantasy at a future time when this action *will*

Schutz' account of human action assumes that *projects consist of single steps*, ordered and deployed in time. We could add that the project's designer must imagine that each step is [a] performable and [b] efficacious. Or, better: that it is *not* in principle [a] nonperformable or [b] inefficacious. Performing the step (with other steps) might realize the project; and the circumstances in which the performance will be attempted (the designer believes) do not preclude its being performed. It is a sound project, given the circumstances.

Whether when performed each step seems to play the part that was anticipated is a different question. The circumstances in which it was thought performable, and efficacious, may not arise; the timing and relationship of steps may in practice depart from what was planned; the planned timing and deployment may prove unsound; or another party may intrude, and prevent or divert the performance.<sup>2</sup>

Reading Schutz we can imagine something like a film animation, each frame containing a projected step. This suggests an objection. Some people conceive desired futures as unpicturable wholes, as end states which elicit an emotional response (satisfaction, triumph, fellowship, affection), for which some *positioning* might be done but which cannot be *performed*. From such a whole-outcome view, the Schutzian project is mechanistic, coldly causal. Thinking of the onset of war from the whole-outcome view warns us that rage, disdain, greed, *hubris*, and other incalculable dispositions often figure in accounts of individual and collective choices for war.

One could also object that the project of action—inherently personal—is not a sound guide to collective decisions, such as decisions taken for the state. Why inherently personal? Because it depends upon imagination, visualization in the mind. Talking of “projects of action” might yield insight into how individuals act around the table of decision, given some dispositions to act in this or that way, but it does not offer an account of the origins of those dispositions. For that we must turn to the collective sources of conventional meaning, and to collective action.

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already *have been* accomplished, when the resulting act *will* already *have been* materialized. Only then may I reconstruct the single steps which will have brought forth this future act.”

<sup>2</sup> The [aborted] 1980 US hostage rescue mission into Iran foundered in the desert on unexpected circumstance and bad timing; and had it been pressed on to Teheran, where it would have met armed Iranian opposition, it would likely have failed. Nonetheless, the plan was conceived and its initial steps undertaken. It would not miss the mark to think of large-scale war as plans gone—and going—awry.

When a mother tells her young son that his father is at war, fighting to protect them, she tells a story which conveys both the notion of war and that there is conduct appropriate to it. Writers of state propaganda consciously do the same. The child need not accept what is told—he may note his mother’s resentment, or wonder if what the state says is true—but types and appropriateness are embedded in stories, whether of parents or teachers or friends. So one way in which people learn what to do in a situation is to be taught. Imagine, as you consider Alfred Schutz’ discussion of “typical means” and “typical situations,” that friends and teachers are saying that an enemy threatens and the “typical means” are to raise an army and resist by killing.

*Alfred Schutz: Learning Types*

If understanding of the world is “knowledge,” as Alfred Schutz avers in writing in pursuit of the structure of the social world, then it can be taught. And if it can be taught there must be teachers. The greater part of his knowledge of the world, he writes, “is socially derived, handed down to me by my friends, my parents, my teachers and the teachers of my teachers.” He learns “ways of life, methods of coming to terms with the environment, efficient recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Schutz, “Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Actions,” in Maurice Natanson [ed], *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 302–346; the quote is at p. 313. Originally published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, v XIV n 1, September 1953, pp. 1–37; and also reprinted with corrections in Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, edited and with an introduction by Maurice Natanson (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), pp. 3–47. Schutz takes as a starting point what he terms “common-sense knowledge” of that world, “a system of constructs of its typicality.” Regarding the implications of that knowledge he describes the social world as

... intersubjective because we live in it as men among other men, bound to them through common influence and work, understanding others and being understood by them. It is a world of culture because, from the outset, the world of everyday life is a universe of significance to us, that is, a texture of meaning which we have to interpret in order to find our bearings within it and come to terms with it. This texture of meaning, however—and this distinguishes the realm of culture from that of nature—originates in and has been instituted by human actions, our own and our fellow-men’s, contemporaries and predecessors. All cultural objects—tools, symbols, language systems, works of art, social institutions, etc.—point back by their very origin and meaning to the activities of human subjects. For this reason

Schutz continues, emphasizing the role of types in language:

The vernacular of everyday life is primarily a language of named things and events, and any name includes a typification and generalization referring to the relevance system prevailing in the linguistic in-group which found the named thing significant enough to provide a separate term for it. The pre-scientific vernacular can be interpreted as a treasure house of ready made pre-constituted types and characteristics, all socially derived and carrying along an open horizon of unexplored content.<sup>4</sup>

In this concise, somewhat labored, expression, Schutz points to issues central to all political understanding, and certainly to an understanding of war choices. It is enough to pick out from his text the phrases *named events* and *socially derived types*. The medium is language, and the motive for a new name that its object be ‘significant enough’ that language-users make a ‘separate term’ for it. So named events, such as ‘world wars’ and ‘civil wars’, get their names not from some immanent characteristic or natural fact but from people speaking together, negotiating significant differences among events which *otherwise* appear to them to be ‘similar’. In doing so, in noting *dissimilarities*, language users are saying that *there is a ‘type’ of which instances of the named event are examples*. There is *adequate similarity* among civil wars to make a type ‘civil war’ useful.

But *adequate similarity* itself can be contested. That issue is at the heart of the pragmatist’s problem. A practitioner confronts novelty and asks: have I seen this before? is the situation I face *adequately similar* to any episodes about which there exists lore? For choosing action appropriate to a situation, the practical actor must first identify the situation he or she confronts, characterizing its significant features, comparing it to known types, either to distinguish it or to assert that it is of a type which is known. A war script, as understood in this text, is an orchestrated set of actions said to be appropriate for a characteristic situation. It assumes that types and typification make sense.

Although Schutz says that typification is a social practice, it is not left to the ‘market’ of conversational exchange. Instead, Schutz posits an

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we are always conscious of the historicity of culture which we encounter in traditions and customs.

On the notion of “common sense,” see Clifford Geertz, “Common Sense as a Cultural System,” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Harper, 1983), pp. 73–93.

<sup>4</sup> Schutz, above, p. 313.

‘in-group’. He does not tell us how it comes into being. This group teaches a common viewpoint, an “anonymous unified point of view of the in-group.” That view includes a definition of the environment and a template for forming plans (here ways of life, methods of action, “efficient recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations.”). The group precedes the [social] individual; and therefore there already exists a practice on behalf of the group.

Typicality arises, Schutz tells us, at the point we leave the object as a unique, individual case, and think of its characteristic as that of “any other similar object, perceived merely as to its type.”<sup>5</sup> Typicality implies a sense of similarity, among objects or episodes. Moreover, people are repeatedly reminded of typicality in the “vocabulary and the syntax of everyday language.”

But Schutz does not argue that the understandings prevailing in a group are given and unchangeable. In the deliberate set phrase “things taken for granted until further notice,” and in speaking of “unquestioned but always questionable” things, Schutz maintains the possibility of questioning, of criticism, of a fresh and challenging analysis. In short, he leaves open the possibility of a critical reading.

So Schutz gives us two snapshots of the actor in society, not of the same order: [1] humans acting in “situations defined by them” but [2] fixing, teaching, enforcing a kind of coherence on the group, a coherence based on the “anonymous unified point of view of the in-group.”

*People are Acquirers of Scripts Socially Enacted Around Them: Schank and Abelson Scripts*

From Schutz we take the notions of intersubjective understanding and generational inheritance, but also the tension between what is “taken for granted” and those who question it. When Schutz writes of “efficient

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307. Schutz then declares his views on scientific models and rational action.

It can easily be understood that the scientific construct of a perfect rational course-of-action type, of its corresponding personal type and also of rational interactions patterns is, as a matter of principle, possible. This is so because in constructing a model of a fictitious consciousness the scientist may select as relevant for his problem merely those elements which make rational actions or reactions of his homunculi possible ...

“All these models,” he writes, “are models of rational actions but not of actions performed by living human beings in situations defined by them.” And so he returns us to the vitality and unpredictability of human action.

recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations” he implies that there are *typical situations* and *typical ends*, to which *typical means* may be applied. When we come into a town and look around us we find, in fact, recognizable activity in pursuit of familiar ends by identifiable means. These pursuits are enacted in time; they have a coherence because each moment leads into the next, and because they are framed by their characteristic ends and means. Schutz tells us that *efficient recipes* are taught. Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, also investigating typical situations, suggest a powerful and provocative alternative to, or extension of, the notion of efficient recipes.

They raise the question how it is people understand a social situation. For their illustrative case—the restaurant—children learn how it works by watching their parents. So it is demonstration in the normal course of life, not ‘teaching’, which conveys the model. With successive entries into restaurants, the child refines and extends a *script* of expectations, characters, transactions and conduct appropriate to a restaurant.

The first point of interest to us is that Schank and Abelson base their argument on episodic memory:

An episodic view of memory claims that memory is organized around personal experiences or episodes rather than around abstract semantic categories.<sup>6</sup>

The script is both less and more than an “efficient recipe”, less because it is a thumbnail structure, more because it incorporates *coordination* of participants who occupy quite different roles:

A script is a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context. A script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots. The structure is an interconnected whole, and what is in one slot affects what can be in another. Scripts handle stylized everyday situations. They are not subject to much change, nor do they provide the apparatus for handling totally novel situations. Thus, a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation ...<sup>7</sup>

Scripts enable understanding because they supply the unstated context. Everyone has reasonable expectations about how others will act. And what applies to characters enacting the script applies also to conversation

<sup>6</sup> Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry Into Human Knowledge Structures* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. Restaurants—their example—are everywhere. People who come for the first time want to know what to expect. Despite variations in theme, decor and menu, transactions are stylized. In many cultures children are taken into restaurants when they are very young.

about a scripted episode: we don't have to tell every detail, because it's enough to invoke the script.<sup>8</sup>

Scripts work as they do, making texts understandable, because they are shared. The speaker would not speak as she does, voicing fragments but expecting to be understood, and the hearer could not supply what is missing, and so achieve understanding, if the two did not share a common script. Or—to be quite accurate—a *more or less* common script.

There seem to be two ways that a person in a Schank and Abelson world acquires a script. The first is direct experience, but experience guided, at least at the outset, by parents, and experience in a world of practices which have been handed down.

But Schank and Abelson also suggest that a person may acquire a script by learning how people plan. This means observing contemporaries, and listening to stories about how people have created a recipe for a situation *novel in some respects*.

A stylized template for action, a script reflects and enforces perceived similarity, and makes for mutually responsive transactions among strangers. But it comes into play in other ways, which do not require that the user actually—say—go to a restaurant. A script makes it easier to tell stories. Knowing a script, people can better imagine transactions when they are told about them. Scripts also have an inherently sequential quality: their subjects are episodes, not tableaux. That means they have the same shape as plans for the future, and as the mutual interactions of any two or more actors over time.

A script alone is not enough to capture social conduct. It misses three features of every interesting episode: (i) the episode's distinctive context, (ii) the people themselves, who also take part in the episode, people who are (we have said) intentional and planful, and then (iii) how two or more actors' plans, perhaps complementary in some respects but incompatible in others, are played through, with and against each other. No *a priori* script can embody these vitals. They must come to the subject from and through her contemporaries.

<sup>8</sup> When we write of 'war scripts' we are making a claim, by analogy and extension, that people in modern societies share a war script, and variations on war scripts. They do not have to have fought wars to know a war script (though for those who have fought, the script will be vividly associated with their war) because they have read and heard of wars, and seen wars on film. We can imagine some of the common features of war scripts: that mobilization by one state leads to mobilization by the other, that attacks are resisted, that new weapons provoke new defenses, that allies are enlisted, that land is overrun and refugees flee. At some point one party may "sue for peace."

*Imitation*

Acquiring a script from a parent, whose introduction is reinforced by experience, incorporates the most direct way of learning: observation and imitation. Another person's actions display an episodic sequence in time, both telling a story and enacting a model. If I see it, and then try to approximate it, I reproduce the model in new terrain. Imitation plays a role in mimicking teachers, internalizing a script, and also in extemporizing responses to otherwise novel situations.

Imitation explains simply how practices spread. Rather than attributing it to common structural features which oblige people to reproduce their favored activities along certain lines, consider instead models which answer the question 'what is appropriate in this situation?' Or better: 'what works here?' 'What works really well here?' There is ample evidence that people who see examples which 'work' will adopt the new activity, once some obstacles are overcome. They may hesitate. Farmers shown new seed and technique, when their livelihood is at stake, and the calendar driven by agricultural seasons, will hedge against risk. But some very quickly, and others after cautious consideration of the evidence, will readily adopt and adapt new ways which show reliable results.

Take, as another example, the emergence of the Web. Nothing better illustrates the power of imitation, or the plasticity of preexisting social relations. Ironically, the Web can also be cited to show how resistant governments are to new ways, and how established institutions adapt prior methods of restriction and control to a new medium. Nonetheless, the important lesson is that knowledge and use of novel cost-effective ways to accomplish sought-for ends will spread like wildfire. How quickly? The number of users is growing at rates which will reach near-saturation in some countries very soon; in others, poorer, there is rapid growth among those who can afford it; and the Web will absorb television and telephone. Content is also undergoing continuous change. According to one report, 20% of web pages were "less than 12 days old," probably meaning they had been created or altered in the last 12 days.<sup>9</sup>

The Web is radically *reorienting* people's expectations about how everyday social transactions can be carried on, from chatting with friends to trading stock. Even more startling, it has *enabled 'everyone' to become a publisher*, and 'everyone' to read any site of choice. Long-

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Times*, 29 May 2000.



standing assumptions about how claims and images can be issued and accessed—some going back to Gutenberg, some to early and mid-twentieth century broadcasting—must be thrown out. We understand the Web as a conjunction of technology and imitation, which commands time and money because people judge it good for what they wish to do.

This book contrasts two large-scale, persistent social practices. One is centered on violence and war: the circulation and recirculation of war scripts and war stories (which carry the message that war is ‘appropriate’ under certain circumstances) and the wars which ensue as a consequence of choices. The other—which we summarize as the *civic script*—takes building and living ordinary life as its center. Because war threatens ordinary life, there are already strong presumptions that governments will address differences by political means: the civic script is already in place. But the war script still circulates. For war and violence, the civic script would require new social practice, in which nuclear war, and large-scale ‘conventional’ war, were so widely delegitimated that few would consider war an ‘appropriate’ step however serious the disputes or uncertainties they faced. Just as war scripts spread, could the civic script, too, spread by imitation? What can we learn by querying the case of the Web’s arrival and adoption? What insights does it confirm or suggest for the contest between war scripts and civic scripts with which this text is concerned?

The first insight which the Web confirms is that *at some junctures*, subject to the particularities of the case, social and cultural practice is deeply plastic. Technology made possible the global attraction of commercial entertainment and the widespread adoption of new contraceptive techniques. Rather rapid change can take place in arenas of belief which are not affected by the technological revolution: in a lifetime we can witness the rise and decline of religions, instrumental ideologies, and grounding beliefs.<sup>10</sup> The Web itself will be a channel for change of convictions and understandings.

A second set of insights arises by analogy from the distinct ways in which information moves on the Web: some make for learning by imitation, but others could be used to work against it. These are hardly novel, but they are illustrated with clarity in elemental web use and the

<sup>10</sup> On 26 June 2000 the US Supreme Court found for a prime example of the civic script, the requirement stemming from a 1966 decision that police read suspects, at the time of arrest, a ‘Miranda statement’ describing their rights to remain silent and be represented by an attorney. In reaffirming this practice, the Court wrote that the Miranda warnings “have become part of our national culture.”

strategies of purposive agents. In brief, they are posting pages, calling up pages from a remote server, pushing pages to other users, preempting some uses to privilege others, and precluding access. Only two require explanation. Preemption is suppressing effective access to some sources by favoring other choices, as when a site prominently displays links to vendors with which it has entered into profit-sharing deals. Preclusion is censorship: in one form, it is the province of repressive police states, preventing access to sites; but it is also the effect of ‘normal’ assertion of regulative and police powers, which have the effect of intruding on privacy and anonymity, and *chilling* the user’s otherwise warm readiness to use the Web for political and social purposes.

- post
- pull
- push
- preempt
- preclude

Imitation requires that the model be visible: on the Web, posting accomplishes that. By analogy to the Web, it would be pointless to expect currency in civil society for stories of nuclear abolition or collective security if few such accounts had been created. How could one judge whether a post-nuclear ‘global security community’ were possible if people did not author vigorous and critical accounts of historical security communities? Then such accounts must be available; and here the Web itself is the medium from which such accounts, once created, can be drawn. ‘Push’ properly responds to requests; so those interested in a Reading which privileges the civic script can set themselves up to receive materials which bear on their interest, as one can today by subscribing to Web and Net information services of a group such as the Nautilus Institute.<sup>11</sup> Uninvited ‘push’ is spammers’ and propagandists’ intruding their messages on users’ time and attention; in the world of Readings of war, it would be the familiar ‘information’ activities of governments, parties, and corporations; and it could be, if they were ungracious, the work of sponsors of the civic script.

A third insight is that reinforcing practices, when linked to learning, accelerate and broaden adoption, yielding qualitative (in addition to quantitative) change. This is better understood through the example of the Web. The Web is not only a model for new ways to do things, but it is the vehicle for the software and instructions about how it can be put to use. Through a variety of already-stylized devices—FAQ sheets, help

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nautilus.org/>

desks, support pages, manuals, technical reports, product reviews, free software courses—users can easily become learners, and solve for themselves the problems which arise in using new products. An analogy between new IT products and social plans would argue that plans should be seen as ‘projectware’, the setting-out of sequential and coordinate instructions to be executed subject to the known practices—the ‘operating system’—of the context in which these plans are to be carried out. Thinking this way may be closer to Schutz’ notion of determinate ‘projects of action’ than the more indeterminate and fictive projects favored in our account. Still, it is more than a coincidence that students of the Soviet Union proposed to distill Soviet policy into an ‘operational code’ which analysts could discern, empowering themselves to interpret Soviet intentions to non-specialists, who were above all concerned about the Soviet Union as a foe in war and ideological struggle.<sup>12</sup> Designing and implementing analogous practices to render systematic thought about global security in forms which could be learned and shared would be a dramatic move. In principle, it should be possible to present, reproduce, develop, and share any proposal offered as an element among global security options, so that the option could be thoroughly assessed and investigated. Web-based gaming among participants at scattered sites may be the most similar present practice.

A fourth lesson of the Web is that reducing barriers to learning is socially smart. Ivan Illich made the general argument for zero and low threshold costs to public goods.<sup>13</sup> When ‘knowledge’ about war and reasons for war is a matter of ‘national security’ subject to secrecy, public learning required for accountable politics will be blindly hindered. Moreover, since true security requires that other leaderships have an informed and stable understanding of your situation and requirements, intentional impediments to their learning rarely—only occasionally—make sense.

One way to tell the story of the 2000 NPT Review Conference is that the non-nuclear-weapon states successfully resisted efforts by the nuclear weapon states to preempt and preclude discussion of nuclear abolition. The nuclear powers pushed several other themes, including the proposed fissile material ban, and—Russia—their (contingent) ratification of

<sup>12</sup> See Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), presenting a 1948 RAND Corporation study.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 57 ff. of online version <http://www.la.psu.edu/philo/illich/deschool/chap4.html> [seen 21 June 2000].

START II and the CTBT in the days before the conference. But the non-nuclear-weapon states, overwhelming in numbers and with at least a center of general agreement, insisted that the conference focus on steps toward abolition; the consensus document is now posted; and it will be truly interesting to see how their ability to define a central objective and give it global publicity puts nuclear weapon abolition on more agendas, and more insistently, than before.

*People Remember, Value, Choose, Anticipate  
and Fear in Episodic Sequences*

I stress—because the project of this text relies heavily on it—the claim that memory is *episodic*. It does not matter here that memory exhibits other paths of creation and recall. It is enough for this project to observe that when we think of the past we usually think of it as a lived existence, a duration, punctuated by actions and events but in a context and often with active characters. This is so even when we rely wholly on intermediate accounts and images. Though none of us were there, the American revolution is not a barren concept: it is Paul Revere’s ride, the Declaration read out, the troops at Valley Forge, and its consequences in bringing forth “a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition ...” as one story-teller put it, that is, a nation which was actively conceived and launched with purpose.

In an episodic reproduction, we ‘see’ fragments of remembered or imagined experience, as if they were films of undertaking and encounter.

By extension, thoughts about social transactions are also typically episodic. Serbs do not fear Croats, or Croats fear Serbs, in the abstract. If they fear members of the other identity, it is because they think of bad things happening, to themselves, their families, or members of their group, in the past or future. A University of Belgrade researcher attributes ethnic conflict to “fear of the future, lived through the past.”<sup>14</sup>

To say *people view society episodically* is clearly at one with the

<sup>14</sup> David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict,” in *International Security* v 21 n 2, Fall 1996, pp. 41–75, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al. [eds], *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 293–326, p. 294, quoting Vesna Pesic, remarks to the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) Working Group on the International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict, 1 October 1994. Dr. Pesic was a senior research fellow at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory at the University of Belgrade.

claim that *people are story-tellers*. Episodes are stories, or fragments of stories, perhaps just sufficient to invoke again the larger story from which they are drawn.

Consider, for example, the claim that when Vietnam War soldiers returned to the United States they were “spit upon” by protesters.<sup>15</sup> This is very different from saying that returning Vietnam veterans did not enjoy the status of “hero” or “defender”. But notice both of these ways of talking about the past. Even the second, which we have tried to purge of its active, episodic character, cannot escape being cast as episode. The veteran must return, must be seen as coming into some scene (a town, a street, an airport, some space which can be visualized), and there must be others whose actions convey that they do not accord status to the returnee. Consider that people have repeatedly said “there were no ticker-tape parades.” I strongly suspect that when we hear or read abstractions about social affairs we translate them into illustrative and episodic examples, because only when we have done so can we assess, consider, appreciate, judge. This text assumes as much.

*To Summarize:*

Let us briefly summarize how we have come to understand the world. There are only three sources of the past: memory, artifacts, and accounts. We rely on all of these to figure out the world we are in and what will “work” to achieve intentions. Sometimes we are “taught” and sometimes we “see scripts enacted”—that is, we see people orchestrating their actions with one another to achieve a complex episode. Whenever we are “taught” we are told a story. When we “see scripts enacted” we may at the same time be told a story about what we see.

Everything we can say about war is marked by the *vicissitudes of human intentions* and the *plight of characters*. This is true not only of every account of the past, but of every proposal, every plan.

<sup>15</sup> Such statements were made and widely circulated in the United States at the time of the Gulf War. A careful analysis concludes that “in the press accounts of protest between 1965–1971, stories in which the anti-war movement directly or purposely targeted troops are virtually non-existent.” There may, of course, have been unreported hostile acts. Thomas D. Beamish, Harvey Molotch, and Richard Flacks, “Who Supports the Troops? Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the Making of Collective Memory,” in *Social Problems* v 42 n 3, August 1995, pp. 344–360, p. 354.

*War Studies, Peace Studies*

Stories about wars and warring—histories, analyses, diaries, memoirs, novels—and depictions on stage and in film serve the double purpose of holding war at arm’s length and seeming to command it. All are carriers of war stories. A secondary literature has come forward, representing and assessing books and films, and what it is they convey.<sup>16</sup> And of course there is a literature *within* government. Much is secret, until prised free, its contribution to learning limited to those with access. On rare occasions government shields of secrecy fail; revelation of government documents can alter public understanding decisively and lead to policy consequences, as the remarkable *Pentagon Papers* showed.<sup>17</sup>

All such works accomplish recirculation and invite interpretation, but of special interest for this study are those intended as contributions to debate about war policy, present and future. Typical of journals which circulate studies of war and possible war among the policy elite and academics are *Survival* [International Institute for Strategic Studies, London] and *International Security* [Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University].

Consider as an example of this art—and one which takes learning as an implicit theme—Michael Howard’s response to the question “When Are Wars Decisive?”

Wars are fought, or should be fought, to attain certain political objectives and decide specific issues. ‘No one starts a war’, wrote Clausewitz, ‘or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so, without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.’<sup>18</sup>

And he proceeds to tell story after story, appealing to historical wars, and even hypothetical courses of conduct not followed, to confirm and render

<sup>16</sup> For example, Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), and Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> The *Pentagon Papers* are documents collected to provide a basis for subsequent internal assessment. Their delivery to the public was unauthorized. A widely-circulated selection is Gerald Gold, Allan M. Siegal and Samuel Abt [eds], *The Pentagon Papers: as Published by the New York Times* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Howard, “When Are Wars Decisive?”, *Survival*, v 41 n 1, Spring 1999, pp. 126–135, p. 126.

more plausible a series of claims about decisive war. He adopts Clausewitz' dictum, and goes further to conclude that the defeated must be denied outside support to reverse the verdict of battle, and a government found among the defeated to "take responsibility for enforcing the peace terms." Then the result can be decisive. And while his views are proffered as a summary of experience, they appear intended to warn against 'total solutions'. "Given the globalisation of politics, the use of military force to impose 'total' solutions is nowadays very unlikely to be decisive."<sup>19</sup>

A classic discussion of the use of historical cases to sharpen policy is Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*.<sup>20</sup> Writing about "serious decision situations" known to them, they observe that the past is largely ignored, in favor of the question "What do we *do*?" Their account, then, confirms our view that decision-makers are looking for appropriate action. They regret that

The past comes in, if at all, in the form of analogy, with someone speaking of the current situation as like some other. That may be to put a familiar face on something strange. It may be for advocacy—because the analogue's supposed lesson supports the speaker's preference as to what to do. Otherwise, all concern is for the present, with seldom a glance backward or, in any focused way, toward the future.<sup>21</sup>

and yet it seems that the past must also come in through answers to the question "what to do?" which will be drawn from known capabilities and procedures, always scriptic.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Neustadt and May also counsel viewing the problem at hand as part of a longer story. They say, at pp. 132–133,

To sum up our argument thus far, it is that people facing difficult decisions should pause to define their concerns. They should take precautions to avoid being misled by analogies of one stripe or another. Then, to the extent possible, they should try to see their concerns in historical context, asking what major trends are relevant and what specifics in the issue's past—especially, we think, in its past politics—bear on the question of what to do now. Here we offer the "Goldberg Rule," the principle that one should always ask "What's the story?"; "time-lines," the associated principle that the story should always be taken back to its beginning (this reduces the chance of storytelling warped by advocacy); and "journalists' questions," a reminder to ask "where," "who," "how" and "why" of past events, as well as "when" and "what."

William McNeill in *The Pursuit of Power*, tracing the interplay of technology and politics in the second millennium, writes an historical overview imposed on fragments of story. The lesson McNeill draws is that

Clear thinking and bold action, based as always on inadequate evidence, are all we have to see us through to whatever the future holds. It will differ from anyone's intentions as radically as the actual past differed from our forefathers' plans and wishes. But study of that past may reduce the discrepancy between expectation and reality, if only by encouraging us to expect surprises—among them, a breakdown of the pattern of the future suggested in this conclusion. For however horrendous it is to live in the face of uncertainty, the future, like the past, depends upon humanity's demonstrated ability to make and remake natural and social environments within limits set mainly by our capacity to agree on goals of collective action.<sup>23</sup>

And Barbara Tuchman cautioned a still wider audience that policy-makers often go astray, as captured in her title *The March of Folly*.<sup>24</sup> It is no surprise that historians tell and retell stories: the very word 'history' tells of its intimate roots in narrative account.

Learning about war becomes a subject of policy when governments and public institutions underwrite war studies. A different emphasis marks the peace studies movement, which emphasizes preconditions for sustainable peace and that 'peace is more than the absence of war'. Nonetheless, their concerns broadly overlap. The main activity of war studies and peace studies centers is the drafting and dissemination of stories about war, about particular wars, about circumstances associated with crisis and war, about similarities and differences among wars.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A. D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 386–387.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly*, above.

<sup>25</sup> Among the most prolific and critically well-received centers are the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Stockholm), International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), Center for Science and International Affairs (Harvard), Stimson Center (Washington), and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (Geneva). Students seek degrees at many universities as preliminaries to academic or public careers. Some mount dedicated programs (in the Department of War Studies, King's College, London, for example, and the program in Peace Studies, Lancaster University) or are known for the quality of their graduates in more general courses in international affairs (Australian National University, University of Geneva, Paul Nitze School of Johns Hopkins University). Mainstream foreign policy research institutes, such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs (London), l'Institut Français des Relations Internationales (Paris), and the Council on Foreign Relations (New York) publish regularly. And a number of smaller centers make important and distinctive contributions, among



Any review of the publications of these centers, their research staffs, and of university academics shows that war can only be discussed through accounts reflecting the episodic qualities of wars themselves. When the text is a dry presentation of the distribution of weapons of a certain type, such as nuclear weapons, it stands for a portion of the larger story of development, production, deployment, and strategic preparation in which it is embedded. Even studies which perform statistical distillation of wars and circumstance, purporting to isolate ‘correlations’ among ‘variables’ across a number of cases taken to be comparable, must conclude—if they are interesting at all—in a narrative claim, an account of discerned regularities in the comparison set.

*War Games, Peace Games: Modeling and Simulation*

‘War gaming’ is a contrivance for learning. It could be ‘peace gaming’. An episode is simulated. The ‘players’ take parts, as if it were a play, and improvise responses to events as they unfold. The object may be to give the players practice, to exercise routines, or to uncover possible interactions which had not been foreseen. In the lexicon of this text, these are devices to aid in drafting plans, understood as stories for the future.

How hypotheticals can be made vivid and explicit for learners is illustrated by Alfred H. Hausrath’s *Venture Simulation in War, Business, and Politics*.<sup>26</sup> Hausrath traces war gaming from early board games, but recognizes the start of modern war gaming in Baron von Reisswitz’ 1811 innovations in Prussia. *Venture Simulation* includes, for example, a photograph of a large-scale replica of Pearl Harbor, built for training by the Japanese navy prior to the attack, with personnel wading alongside the miniature battleships. It provides an overview of multiplayer strategic gaming, including RAND Corporation simulations and the POLEX (Political Exercise) experiment at the MIT Center for International Studies. Hausrath briefly discusses peace gaming, quoting Jerome Laulicht on simulations at Leeds University and the Peace Research Centre, Lancaster University that “it is the only method developed within

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them IRIS (Université Paris VII), Center for Nonproliferation Studies (Monterey Institute of International Studies), and the Peace Research Institute (Frankfurt).

<sup>26</sup> Alfred H. Hausrath, *Venture Simulation in War, Business, and Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971). Hausrath was Chief, Military Gaming Division, Research Analysis Corporation.

the last few decades which holds real promise as an addition to traditional analytical techniques.”<sup>27</sup>

In modeling and simulation, structure is established in advance by the ‘rules of the game’ and a statement of initial circumstances. Within the set rules, each player has room for choice, enacting a sequence of moves, the story itself. ‘Controllers’ may intervene to enforce the rules, introduce new facts, move for ‘other actors’, and judge interim consequences of moves taken. The object is an interplay of the fixed conditions and controls with the free, imaginative judgments and actions of the players.

Two examples will illustrate how such stories can be exploited for learning.

In the late 1990s the newly-formed US Defense Threat Reduction Agency, charged with defense against possible ‘terrorist’ attack, asked members of the US intelligence community to prepare “five or six realistic scenarios of BW or CW attack on the United States.” The object was to shift focus from slogans about ‘terrorist threat’ to rigorously defined, technically possible attacks. The staff would ‘walk forward’ through each scenario, testing responses that could be made at each point; more interestingly, they would then ‘walk back’ from the conclusion, searching for precautions or preparations which could have been taken and would have had some chance of preventing or mitigating the attack. For our purposes, the point is that they centered on scenarios, on stories, marked by *believability*.

William Potter, in the 1980s at UCLA and in the 1990s at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (Monterey), has conceived and led courses simulating arms control negotiations. Students take roles representing negotiators of actual or impending arms control and disarmament measures. In the 1980s he simulated the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiations, in Los Angeles and in Bonn, and in Bonn the students acting as ‘Soviet negotiators’ were counseled by a representative of the Soviet embassy. In 1999 Potter and Nikolai Sokov, a former Soviet START negotiator, co-taught a course which simulates START III. Their object is to give students practice in negotiation, coming to understand the other’s needs and how mutually-advantageous outcomes can be sought, but also to search for fruitful paths in actual

<sup>27</sup> Jerome Laulich, “The Vietnam War Game,” in *New Society*, 17 January 1966, cited in Hausrath, p. 307. The work done at Leeds and Lancaster was a variation of the Inter-Nation Simulation.

negotiation.

### *Conclusion*

We think of war—past wars, future threats, steps to take, consequences, battle, ‘costs’, alliances, enemies—episodically.

This is the common situation of people in society, whether disposed to war at a given juncture, or skeptical. *Homo civilis* chooses among projects, imagined episodically, and constructed as transforms of stories of the past. The umbra of war lies in those stories, whose human characters speak of war as terror, but also of warmaking as appropriate, sometimes necessary, sometimes as the only recourse against the ultimate plight of group and individual annihilation.

If the citizen is ill-disposed to war in a given episode, at a given moment, whatever action she or he considers—especially that of speaking up—will be enacted before other men and women who are themselves the carriers of stories and reimagined worlds. Those they propose to challenge, or to war against, are also creatures of the stories they tell and the projects they spin from them.

Among the oldest stories told are the oft-quoted words of *Isaiah 2:4*:

they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any  
more.

How people move from interpretation to decision is the subject of the next chapter.



## 7 Choosing

Modern nation-states initiate war only by decision. It is not enough that ‘*war stories*’ prompt an inclination to war, or that some people consider war appropriate in such-and-such circumstances. In every modern nation-state the decision to war is taken by designated officers. At a given time the specific people who hold those offices decide whether to war or not. Those who choose war may reasonably be held to account for their decision.

This point may appear obvious, but it is sidestepped by both politicians and academics. Prime ministers usually want to shift responsibility to an adversary state or to ‘circumstances’. Some academics and controversialists who study society—or the mind, the economy, history—acknowledge that decisions are made, but insist the ‘hidden’ sources of the decision, not the decision-makers, are what matter. These views are determinist, and slight intention.

### *Provocative Acts*

Many wars are begun in response to measures short of war taken by other states.<sup>1</sup> Such provocative acts must have a place in our analysis. A provocative act may be the catalyst of fundamental change in a situation, from peace to war. Iran’s sending assassins to Baghdad was such an act; Sadaam responded by striking against Iran, launching the Iran-Iraq War. Earlier, Iraq’s nuclear reactor program drew an Israeli air strike, certainly an act of war, but Iraq chose not to counterstrike: a provocative act that did not lead to war. Every such episode poses special problems for an interpreter, especially if ‘responsibility’ is at stake. The point here,

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this text references to the ‘state’ also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to movements competing by force among themselves for state power, or taking up arms against the state.

however, is that there are *two* authoritative decisions which matter. One launches the provocative act. The second chooses whether or not to respond with war, or with provocative responses in turn.

What is to be made of provocative acts? In the argument developed here, they are put in the same tray with actual attacks. Clearly there are differences, but the argument is that *for the subject of war aversion* an intentional act which risks war requires as strong a justification as a deliberate act to undertake war.

There must be very good reason to confront the leadership of another state with a possible *casus belli*. The test ‘would I adopt the judgment—that this act should be undertaken—as my own?’ requires as compelling a set of reasons as beginning a war itself. Of course, the provocative dimensions of the action must be understood. The position comes down to two requirements for policymakers: they take on a responsibility to see the provocative character of an act, and an obligation—almost always—not to commit provocative acts. Only when strong contrary reasons argue for the act must the case to forswear it give way.

On this argument a leadership which commits provocative acts may plead neither ignorance nor innocence. The analogous case in domestic law is that of the hothead who, firing at the outside of an occupied building, inadvertently kills a resident within. He is not relieved of responsibility to foresee the consequences of his act.

#### *Are There ‘Conditions’ Which Make for War?*

Having cleared this thicket of the ‘provocative act’, the argument comes back to the decision for war. What conditions make for war? Of course, there are formal prerequisites. The officers who decide must be *authorized*, exercising charters. They must be entitled to issue lawful orders which others will obey. If there are constitutional preliminaries which must be met, such as approval by another branch of government, those too are among the requirements.

But the prime condition, one often created by accounts of action ‘in similar circumstances’ in the past, is that there is a *willingness to war*. As we have put it above, the authoritative leadership considers war an *appropriate* action in the conditions believed to exist.<sup>2</sup> Without at least a

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Black, canvassing war since 1450, identifies readiness to war as “bellicosity.” *Why Wars Happen* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 33–39.

reluctant readiness by one leadership to commit to war, no war will be undertaken.

This must be put somewhat formally, to take account of the issue of ‘provocations’. In the case of war ensuing from a ‘provocation’ the leadership which provokes is *willing to risk war*, an important form of war willingness. The decision to war requires *willingness to war* by at least one of the two states: by the leadership making the decision, or—in the ‘provocation’ case—by a leadership which decided to commit the acts taken as a *casus belli*.

Saying that a leadership is ‘willing to war’ is not to say it is hell-bent on war, or wants war for its own sake. On the contrary, it is likely to hope that it will succeed in navigating its affairs without war. But it is willing to pilot close to the rocks; it does not actively seek war, but prefers running the risk of war to giving up its provocative conduct. In another metaphor, invoking the abyss, this is called ‘brinksmanship’.

*Willingness* alone is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition, for war. Not every provocative act is so provocative that it triggers a war. There *must* be a decision, and it *will* mean war, provided only that nothing then intervenes to prevent the decision’s being enacted. *Authoritative decision* is the necessary and sufficient condition for war.

#### *Preliminaries to Choice*

Any official knows that war decisions do not occur suddenly, but are carefully prepared. The distinctions among ‘preparation’, ‘pre-decision’, and ‘decision’ must be kept in mind, in order not to lose sight of the absolute centrality of the final authoritative choice. Decision remains the ‘necessary and sufficient condition’, the gate which must be opened for war to ensue.

Decision-makers’ powers, who must concur or pre-approve, and how staff work is done, reflect institutional rules and custom. The meeting is occasioned by ‘circumstances’ which have been interpreted and disputed: and those exchanges are known roundabout. Argument about what a situation means typically works from comparison, from similarity and difference, which means that accounts of earlier episodes are explicitly and implicitly brought in, as specific cases and through general claims about cases ‘like this’. The same can be said of answers to the question ‘what do our adversaries intend to do?’ The plans on the table—every proposal implies a plan—are also designed through imaginative use of

accounts of the past. Finally, there will have been prior conversations: efforts to get members to commit, or to reveal their positions. So the decision-makers come to a table shaped both by ambient accounts and by tactical political moves, designed to mould the context in which a decision will be made to favor one or another outcome.

Is the result then a foregone conclusion? The record of deliberations by actual decision-makers suggests that it is usually not. Decision-makers voice real disagreements about the ‘circumstances’, adversary’s intentions, what ‘kind of situation’ it is, and appropriate action. Certainly that was the case among US officials in the ‘Cuban Missile Crisis’ of 1962. Difference and debate also mark consideration of major steps in ongoing wars. This is thoroughly documented in the Pentagon Papers, and accounts of meetings of the ‘Wise Men’ who counseled Lyndon Johnson not to expand the war after the Tet Offensive (where the salient decision was whether to expand or contract the ongoing war).

The result is not a foregone conclusion because those at the table can say ‘no’. An office-holder has dual powers, to favor and to refuse. Consider, for example, a constitutional body which adopts proposals by a majority. Smith and Jones, meeting the customary terms, put a war proposal on the agenda. They ‘push’ it on the agenda. Then there are two possibilities. Enough others will join them and the proposal is adopted. Or, as often happens, they struggle to obtain sufficient assent. The important point for war decisions is not that alternatives may be put on the table, though they often are, but that members who do not join the ‘push’ gain voice and authority by refusing to sign up. If their vote has value, they can bargain with it. This *latent power of non-concurrence to a proposal which lacks ‘adequate’ approval* is the starting-point for every proposal. In bodies operating under a constitutional requirement of majority approval each member is endowed with a defined voice.

Voice derived from non-concurrence does not require voting rules. In a political body, such as a Cabinet ostensibly advising the Prime Minister, or the Political Bureau of a single party, members may also trade on being able to say ‘no’. Of course, a member who is uncooperative risks exclusion, part of an ongoing political calculation.

### *Comparing Alternatives and Saying ‘No’*

Those who draft and choose find that judgment does not come easy. On the contrary, a complex proposal is difficult to assess. Will it work?



With what risks? At what cost? With what consequences? Well-conceived alternatives, especially sharply different ones, are difficult to compare. More important, each person drafting or judging a plan brings to the work an array of interpretive standards and preferences which embody inconsistency and even contradiction. The problem of choice, too, is different for each person taking part, because each is singularly situated, with a unique repertoire of resources, skills, and interests.

In many hierarchic structures, and in autocratic polities, this problem is solved by vesting the choice in one man or woman. The complex modern polity resolves this issue by constituting a locus of *authoritative decision*. Those who come to the table are, as we have just said, carriers of multiple and less-than-consistent dispositions toward alternatives, more or less frank about uncertainties, more or less uncertain about the prospects for any plan. They do not need to 'solve' this problem. It is evaded by the device of authoritative decision among explicit but abbreviated texts.

Because those who join in the decision have private and incommensurate assessments of the alternatives, it is wrong to assume that the proposal adopted was welcomed completely or even preferred by those who 'supported' it. In the introduction we wrote that

plans become salient proposals because of their promise, but a plan is selected because doubts, hesitations, preference for alternatives, and resistance to it no longer meet the negotiated standard of 'adequate objection' in the group entrusted with decision. A decision to war does not require that participants hold the same interpretations or prefer the same plan.

identifying a central feature of decision. Formally, the status of a proposal is that it has *not* been approved. Participants reserve their right to say 'no' until the proposal is on the table as the salient text of a choice. Informally, there remains room for political negotiation. During consideration, changes and whole alternatives may be put into play. A participant who commits to the most salient proposal shifts to a different footing, retaining room to intervene in 'perfecting' and adjusting the proposal, able to withdraw support only with great discomfort.

Of course, more than one proposal may be sufficiently attractive that there is no longer 'adequate objection', in which case the group moves to choose by preference. Where there is an undecided war question, however, it is absolutely key what law or custom has set as sufficient objection to block approval, and the entire issue then turns on addressing objection. The most crude measure may be to remove objectors from the

group which decides, or shift the decision to a different group, such as an ad hoc group of cabinet members which the full cabinet would not dare dispute.

*Around the Table*

Now consider the decision-makers gathered together around the table. They are individuals, but also participants in a collective process, and may represent constituencies to which they must answer. As individuals they perform interpretive acts, just as everyone else. How do their individual judgments become converted to state decision? And what is the significance of that process?

The short answer is that they must, at the final moment, say 'aye' or 'nay' to an authoritative text. A longer answer brings in more dimensions, such as shaping the text and bargaining for others' votes. If they speak in discussion, they make claims [about fact, cause, and category] and may debate specific plans. They lodge interpretations. They contest claims. They tussle and maneuver to achieve a text which better suits their aims. At the end of the day, however, their choices are limited to 'aye', 'nay', and 'abstain'.

In that fact lies an extraordinary mechanism. Having to decide, forcing several benign steps, makes collective action possible. It compels drafting a text. It invites alternatives. When the actual vote comes, that choice collapses the vying of contraries into a single authoritative decision. Before the decision, even if discussion focuses on one text alone, the decision-makers will take positions which are not of one piece; they will be skew to one another; they will proceed from different assumptions; even those who agree to the text will do so for different reasons. There is a *momentary suspension of interpretation* and a *gathering around an authoritative interpretation*, both in the same instant. At the point of decision differences are momentarily silenced. The text is fixed.

As all practitioners know, no rule, order, or decision ends argument. Argument shifts to the meaning of the text, how it should be enacted, and often—though in a new context—whether it should be enacted at all. This new burst of contention diminishes not one morsel the crucial place of the decision which has been taken. Often the decided text defines and focuses the new arguments.

*War Choices Are in the Hands of a Few*

If decisions are taken around the table, only a few people take part. Can that be true? There are important examples to the contrary. The Athenian citizenry—not all the people, but a large number—debated and voted whether to make war. The US Constitution unambiguously grants Congress the power to declare war. If the Executive deferred to Congress—it does not—the separate approval of both the 100-member Senate and 435-member House would be required before war could be launched, as would be appropriate in a representative Republic. But practice confirms that in modern states the decision to war is made by a small number of people, as few as one, often fewer than a dozen, at most several tens.

In the United States, the independent legislative branch is vested with constitutional power to bar a war it does not approve. This power, and citizen skepticism, no doubt weigh among decision-makers, bringing them to hold back from a war, or provocative acts, which they would otherwise be of a mind to undertake. Restraint is notably hard to document. On the other hand, there is no example of a modern executive which sought permission of the legislature to launch war and was refused. An executive bent on war will find ways to win approval, or will preempt procedure by acting first and seeking approval only after the fact. The US debate between Congress and the President about ‘war powers’ reflects exactly that experience.

Since war is begun by one state, *pace* Blainey’s dictum that it takes two states to have a war, it follows that *the necessary and sufficient conditions for war can be met by rather few people in one government [or movement]*. War could be widely unpopular, but still be undertaken.

Nonetheless, war decisions cannot ignore views current in society. The men and women who sit in a war council draw from much the same pool of accounts available to society as a whole. They know the same stories of the adversary, the same historical wars, something of the same account of circumstances. They share some expectations about ‘what the army is for’. If they are privy, additionally, to secret informations, that is likely to confirm and reinforce—not contradict—prevailing opinion. If Brezhnev’s Political Bureau launched the Afghan War without consultations, it was reflecting a Russian disregard for Central Asians. Decision-makers are part of society, exchanging and negotiating interpretations as others do. In fact, they make the link between civil

society *en large* and the war decision, the irreversible act of war or provocation.

*Other High-Level War Decisions*

Much we have said about the choice of war applies to other categories of decision which must come to the highest level of government. These are actions to ally, procure, deploy, escalate, deescalate, and bring the war to an end, and the corresponding threats. (Of course, procurements which command high-level attention are those of major systems, and deployments those to strategically or symbolically significant sites.)

THREAT TO:	ally	procure	deploy	WAR	escalate			
ACTION TO:	ally	procure	deploy	WAR	escalate	deescalate	end	

These steps require, in any modern polity, adequate concurrence of senior officials. In practice that means that enough of those who *could* block the move by saying ‘no’ do not do so. The highly-salient Reagan Administration proposal for ‘Dense Pack’ basing of MX missiles died in days after dissent of three of the five Joint Chiefs was made known.

A move to draw down or end the war, of course, runs the risk of falling afoul of the government’s commitment to the war. In the worst case, opposing the war is judged to be treason. While some wars end by exhaustion or withdrawal, governments do negotiate the end of wars, once again exercising choice.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

## 8 Reading Groups

Between the individual and the state lie other structures, overlapping fabrics of family, locality, workplace, and association. All are political constructs built on conversation, sustained by interest and intention. Much of the direction of society is chosen here, through mutual accommodation and systematic exclusions. When talk turns to these systems of undertaking and regulation, and their relation to the formal institutions of justice, governance, and authority, we have civil society.

Society is a negotiation on a vast scale; civil society is the negotiation among men and women as citizens.

Civil society incorporates individuals in a broader discourse on war. It is in civil society that contrary interpretations contest, and *shared* interpretations form and have currency. Through civil society groups align along interpretations and calls for action. Civil society moulds those who act for the state, it beats upon them like the wind, it thrusts proposals to them, it threatens them with sanctions, and it supplies the state through which they act with soldiery and treasure.

### *War Parties, Peace Parties*

Societies do not spring to the prospect of war with a single voice. Just as the decision to undertake war, or a war provocation, is rarely a foregone conclusion except in response to mortal attack, so it is that choices are debated in society. Roosevelt could only assist Great Britain—until Hitler declared war on the United States after Pearl Harbor—because he lacked the political support to do more. A vocal party opposed entering the war.

Every move to war meets and sparks resistance. Johnson's and Nixon's abilities to carry the Congress and much of the country could not prevent widespread rejection of the Vietnam War. We have earlier alluded to isolationist refusal to join the Second World War—which kept

the United States out for more than two years. In WWI, the United States kept out for three. The French in 1939 could not agree to resist Hitler. And the German public, we are told, was skeptical of Hitler's attack on Poland. In each of these cases there were strong-voiced advocates for non-participation, and no doubt much quietly held dismay.

How do 'positions' form and lodge in civil society? Why do they so often take the form of contraries? Among citizens, some care little, others care a great deal: what effects does this have? And what is the relationship between 'public opinion'—the separate opinions of individuals—and the purposive, focused lobbying of organized 'interests'? Who represent the views which decision-makers accept or reject?

Both war-making and active war-avoidance require a firm footing in civil society. Without it, the state could not undertake war. A modern state could stake 'defense policy' on a global 'no-war security community', rather than war scripts of self-help, only with manifest and sustained civil support. No nuclear power could abandon nuclear weapons without broad agreement, and broad civil agreement in a democratic state.

Therefore talking about war and war avoidance requires an explicit model capturing how views develop, differentiate, circulate, and coalesce, and how identifiable 'groups' and institutions form around views, and how people adopt views as their own. What lies between personal judgments and direct conversations, purely local, and great waves of consensus and disagreement which sweep society and define vital choices?

*The seed.* Views form and re-form from the seed of a *plight* and *proposal*. We say 're-form' because there are always stories of similar plights in the past, so that for every plight there are historical accounts which tell of past responses, and past structures of alternative responses, and what came of them. Typical plights for this study are 'possible attack' and 'threatening our allies' and 'stealing nuclear secrets' and 'waging ethnic cleansing against the Albanian Kosovars' and 'state terrorism'. A plight is pushed or pulled onstage: pushed by exogenous events, or pulled by a purposive agent—such as a political party faction, or an already-formed organization in civil society.

*The contraries.* Dialectically, every seed breeds contraries. At the simplest they are *do something* and *do nothing*, or do nothing much. Governments have good reasons to avoid major commitments, so among

the focal moves which are taken are some designed to enable government to deny it is 'doing nothing' while actually it 'does little'. That may be the wise course. Other proposals spring from the seed. They reflect refinements. 'Intervene' leads to 'only with others' and 'not now' and 'never'. 'Build missile defenses' leads to 'only with Russian cooperation' and 'not now' and 'never'. 'Abolish nuclear weapons' leads to 'keep nuclear weapons' and 'keep enough nuclear weapons' and 'promise to give up nuclear weapons someday'. And so on. Among those most intimately concerned with policy, refined sub-proposals will prompt sub-contraries, mimicking fractals.

*Reinterpretation and recirculation.* Unrepeated, views fall away. An individual gives the plight-proposal pair less attention. Murray Edelman contends that new problems displace old.<sup>1</sup> The number of those who pay attention to the plight-proposal pair declines. There are no new recruits. But if people talk about the plight-proposal pair, if exogenous events continue to force it onto people's attention, if it is a subject on the one-directional media (press, video), if it is taken up by government or organizations with access to the media, then its currency will be sustained, and may grow. With growing salience its contraries too will be refreshed and recirculated.

*Individuals.* This text always returns to judgments, interpretations, and utterances of individuals, their claims and the reasons they offer. So we must ask how someone orients herself to the plight-proposal pair and its contraries, which are now views in circulation. This is not an easy matter, but it seems to turn on several questions.

First, is the individual in a position to make her own judgment? Those who think not might cite any of several reasons: that she is ignorant, or can only parrot, or holds disabling cultural predilections or allegiances, or would express not judgment but a psychological need, for example. We accept, in contrast, that every person who would utter a judgment is in a position to judge. And in a participatory society where uttering judgments was safe, utterance implies a readiness to be challenged. But is utterance safe? That leads to the next question.

Second, is the individual free to identify with a view, or to publicly reject it? (We know there are societies where purposive agents manipulate and channel choice, far beyond simply attempting to 'manipulate the media'. Is the individual a pawn? Do state and

<sup>1</sup> Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 27-29.

community penalize some choices? Is there active censorship?) This is an empirical question. It is significant because if I cannot speak my opinion of the plight-proposal as I would choose to do if free, cannot challenge it or offer contraries or say that I ‘adopt it as my own’, then there is less possibility for a group to form around my opinion.

Third, I would want to understand the prime terms around which those who share the plight-proposal or any of its contraries are said to ‘share a view’. The question is ‘Who am I that I would be known as a member of this group?’ What identity does ‘joining this group’ imply? I would want to know because an ‘identity’ may confer a persona which I would not recognize. I may need to refine my views, insisting that even if my view *overlaps* another it is distinctly not the same.

Fourth, on what shared experience or understandings do the common positions of members of the group depend? Some candidate terms are ‘policy’, ‘sympathy’, and ‘awareness’, and others ‘custom’, ‘interest’, ‘belief’, ‘fear’, and even ‘opportunism’; and they are not mutually exclusive. I would want to know this so that I understood the sources of the plight-proposal pair and its claim to an ongoing place in the discourse of civil society. Here we argue that groups concerned with war are united around *shared stories* and *shared plans*, which may in turn reflect any of the terms cited. The shared experiences are *episodic* and shared understandings *episodically derived*.

*Organization.* Someone will organize to promote the proposal.

• • • •

Groups rarely form *de novo*. More often what we see and call a ‘group’ has antecedents, a lineage, precursors. The founders have ‘come from somewhere’. They are migrants from old communities to new towns, religious reformers, educational innovators, political splittists. Even when the kernel of a new society cannot be traced explicitly to departures from an old organization, founders carry the stories of their own experiences. The *seed* of a group—the common starting-point in a plight and proposal which draws the founders to one another—already vibrates with life as the first members affirm their identification with the group.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As demonstrated, for example, in Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).



*Distinguishing Among Groups*

Groups come in different forms. Some are *organizations*, marked by purpose, membership, and decisions. Some are *identities*, claimed and—sometimes—ascribed, as ‘Kurds’, ‘Greeks’, ‘elites’. Others reflect a *similarity*. The war question requires the reader to consider the *similarities of understanding* which join together a society which chooses war. For if it were rent by sufficiently strong and contrary views about going to war, the war party could not prevail. Instead, common understandings become bound into national identity and that in turn creates the precondition for the armed and organized state at war. *Mutatis mutandis* the same is true of revolutionary movements.

Set aside for the moment the state, and organizers within the state, propagandizing, recruiting, selling policies, cultivating common views, claiming to *represent* defined positions. Of course they attempt to do so, with real consequences. But to isolate similarity of positions, consider here the group defined as *those who hold similar views concerning a [particular] subject*.

This text terms such a group a *Reading Group* and the ‘similar view’ a *Reading*. This coinage is required because no ordinary English term quite captures the notion of ‘people who hold a view *in common*’. Phrases such as ‘public opinion’ and ‘social belief’ fudge important questions: *who* holds the opinion and *who does not?* do some accept mere fragments, others the whole belief? which men and women *deny* the view in question?

Choosing ‘*Reading*’ stresses interpretation, not accomplished once and finished, but recurrent, successive, repeatedly refreshed.<sup>3</sup> Of course, some adopt a Reading in a purer, more complete, less qualified form: their version displays stronger correspondence with the salient claim, while others’ views are more dilute or partial versions of the central claim. Among all possible Reading Groups an observer might claim to

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Strauss, former head of the Democratic National Committee, reflecting on 16 months as US Ambassador in Moscow, said it

reminds me how people change their minds. This is true in the United States and in Russia. In my lifetime Americans have changed their minds about Prohibition, isolationism and racial and sexual equality. They have changed their minds several times about the role of government in the economy and society. The ebb and flow of changing minds is what politics and government are all about.

*International Herald Tribune*, 16 November 1992.

see, some will center on *shared stories* and *shared plans*, and some of those will concern war. Those are the Reading Groups most relevant to this text.

### *Reading Groups*

Consider an example. Press reports soon after the Gulf War ‘Operation Desert Storm’ stated that US forces, using a large armored vehicle equipped with a sand plow, buried Iraqi soldiers alive in their trenches.

This is a story, a particularly vivid one. It cannot be conceived using bare concepts. In the mind’s eye something akin to a tank plows along the trenchline, thrusting sand onto men who then die horribly, as the sand asphyxiates and entombs them.

These reports prompt any number of Readings, each centered on brief defining accounts: one, that the claim was made; a second, that it was true; and a third, that in burying enemy soldiers alive the Bush Administration committed a grave moral offense; and so on. One Reading emphasizes *intention*: that there was a *plan* to bury enemy soldiers alive.<sup>4</sup> Then there are issues of evidence: what of the fact—if it is a fact—that no one has excavated the trenches to see if any Iraqi soldiers were actually buried?<sup>5</sup>

Readings often embody claims about intention and cause. “George Bush fought the Gulf War for oil.” “Sadaam Hussein wanted to become leader of the Arab World.” “Iraq was in need of money to finance its weapons programs.” The point here is not whether these claims are ‘true’ or ‘false’, but that there are people who associate themselves with these positions. “Yes, that’s my view.” “Yes, Bush wanted the oil, otherwise why didn’t he help the Bosnians?”

<sup>4</sup> On this episode, Frontline transcript 1408T, stating air date 4 February 1997, but ‘originally broadcast’ 10 January 1996:

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script\\_b.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script_b.html)

[seen 27 May 2000]. Col. Lon Maggart of the 1st Infantry Division claims credit for devising the plan and testing it. Frontline reported that analysts thought “hundreds” were so killed, and that the Army said about 150.

<sup>5</sup> After writing this, I found a further account, undated, by Patrick J. Sloyan of *Newsday*’s Washington bureau, citing Col. Maggart and Col. Anthony Moreno. <http://www.newsday.com/about/pat0912.htm> [seen 27 May 2000]. Col. Moreno is quoted as saying that

I came through right after the lead company. What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples’ arms and things sticking out of them.

Not all who associate themselves with such propositions do so absolutely. Moreover, having first agreed to a proposition, a Reader might imagine moral justifications: what if the Iraqi troops in the trenches were about to fire chemical weapons, or were simply armed with chemical weapons?

In short, Readers can change their minds. If many Readers changed their views at the same time it could give rise to talk of tides of convergence and divergence.

As another Gulf War example, take the claim that “[as of late December 1990] sanctions had failed.” A Reading around that view is unmistakable, as is a Reading around the contraries: that “sanctions are working” or that “it is too early to say whether sanctions would or would not have the intended effects.” These Readings were clearly expressed in the Congressional debate of 10–11 January 1991 about whether to authorize President Bush to begin Gulf War II.

Readings need not concern a current, contested issue. What of the fact that attention to a given claim wanes with time? Or that new revelations rekindle interest in a claim, casting a long-held Reading into doubt? In 1992 a newspaper published a letter from two former United Nations officials, George Ivan Smith and Conor Cruise O’Brien, claiming that the aircraft which carried Dag Hammarskjöld, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, to his death in Zaire in 1961 was brought down by foul play of mercenaries hired by Belgian mining interests.<sup>6</sup> If you are persuaded by their evidence, you would abandon the Reading around the official finding at the time<sup>7</sup> and associate yourself with a Reading on the Smith-O’Brien hypothesis. You might also reflect on the fact that you had not thought about Hammarskjöld’s death in many years.

Just what is it that individuals do that associates them with a Reading? There is no Smith-O’Brien Party and no one wears a T-shirt proclaiming “Hammarskjöld was Murdered.” But—as all Reading Groups are in the eyes of beholders—you may freely posit a Reading Group around the Smith-O’Brien claim. There are people who read the Smith-O’Brien letter, or learned about the matter in some other way (as, for example, by reading the previous paragraph). Noticing, of course,

<sup>6</sup> *The Guardian*, 11 September 1992; O’Brien expands on his claim in *The Guardian*, 25 September 1992.

<sup>7</sup> that “there was no evidence to support any suggestion that the aircraft was fired upon or suffered an explosion in flight.”

may lead only to deliberate agnosticism *on the question whether Smith-O'Brien are correct*, but even agnostics on that issue are willy-nilly members of the Group of those who hold the view 'Smith and O'Brien are said to have claimed ...'

There are some real difficulties with the notions of Reading Groups and Readings. They do not diminish the utility of these concepts, which are only shorthand for '*people who hold a view in common*' and the corresponding view which they hold. But these difficulties should be borne in mind:

- Reading Groups are constructs of an observer, or the shared construct of multiple observers;
- the 'view' around which a Reading Group is said to exist is a matter of the observer's choice;
- although the members of a Reading Group may in fact have rendered some interpretation of the subject at hand, no two will have done so in quite the same way;
- it is, therefore, the work of the observer to assert that a certain [adequate] similarity exists in the Readings of members to qualify them as members of this Reading Group;
- typically, the observer has no reliable way to know whether a 'member' is stating his or her view 'in good faith';
- it will not be a simple 'yes' or 'no' question whether a person's views qualify as those of the Group, since views may be held in fragmentary, incomplete, and even inaccurate forms;
- members may or may not consider themselves to be associated with others who hold views 'similar' to theirs.

All those qualifications in mind, what is important about a Reader is that a Reader creates accounts. When an account overlaps the defining central claim of the Reading, when there is a similarity they might recognize, or others might recognize, it makes sense to talk of them as participants in a shared view. In practice Readers compose *successive interpretations*, their changing *readings of the [relevant] world*, and in doing so reinterpret accounts and experience bearing on the topic. As the Hammarskjold example illustrates, convergence on one understanding implies standing apart from, perhaps diverging from, even actively rejecting some other views.

*Three Ways of Imagining a Reading*

There are three quite distinct ways to conceive a Reading, which differ in detail and, therefore, comprehensiveness. The Reading as a whole, the sum of individual accounts which have a defining element in common, is extensive and diverse. Then there is a claim, a summary claim, which might be expressed in a sentence or two. Finally there is a brief, iconic pointer to the claim and the Reading.

For example, a 1992 newspaper carries an excerpt from a letter written by Francesco Calogero and Joseph Rotblat, figures in the Pugwash Movement, to Boris Yeltsin, in which they assert there is a “window of opportunity” to ban nuclear tests and ask him to extend the existing Russian test ban moratorium.<sup>8</sup> That of course embodies one specific claim, that the time is propitious, but it implies another, that a ban would enhance security. So we can imagine a Reading, the set of all views which are adequately similar to the Calogero-Rotblat position, including those which hold it more tenuously or incompletely, and the Reading Group, those whose views form the Reading. We have identified the defining claim, the brief statement—in this case, an assessment or account of the present and a project for the future—which captures this Reading. The iconic pointer around which claim and Reading are centered is “CTB”: the Comprehensive Test Ban. Or perhaps it is only “test moratorium,” a step toward CTB.

The Calogero-Rotblat letter was published as the US Senate and House passed resolutions calling for a nine-month nuclear test moratorium, with some provision for a limited number of US tests thereafter to verify design changes in two warheads, changes said to have been undertaken to ensure warhead safety. Senators who wanted moratorium only with the test exception may be thought of as members of the same Reading Group defined by Calogero and Rotblat, but not exactly, subject to a condition.

We could call these Reading, claim, and core.

*Ritual, Belief and Symbol*

Recall our original question: How can we talk about people who hold some salient view *in common* but are not organized? Even if there is no term for such a group, something very similar commands the attention of

<sup>8</sup> *The International Herald Tribune*, 25 September 1992.

anthropologists and sociologists when they consider ritual and symbol in a society. Thus Victor Turner writes of dominant ritual symbols that they display three properties: condensation, unification of disparate significata, and polarization of meaning. A symbol represents “many things and actions”; “the disparate significata are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought”; and the symbol embodies opposites. These opposites are an ‘ideological pole’ and a ‘sensory pole’. Turner cites Edward Sapir’s distinction between *referential symbols* and *condensation symbols* and writes that, for Sapir,

Ritual symbols are at one and the same time referential and condensation symbols, though each symbol is multi-referential rather than uni-referential. Their essential quality consists in their juxtaposition of the grossly physical and the structurally normative, of the organic and the social. Such symbols are coincidences of opposite qualities, unions of ‘high’ and ‘low’.<sup>9</sup>

Are Readings the ritual symbols of today’s political class? The *core* is a symbol, standing for an array of views. It unifies that array. It carries other connotations than those strictly centered on the Reading.<sup>10</sup> Claiming is something akin to the instrumental purpose of ritual; now I utter an interpretation, and I do so in a world of others, and there is an occasion for us to act together. The comparison to ritual symbol is most intriguing in pointing to the opposites, cerebral and emotional, polarized meanings, both present in the symbol. For “nuclear test ban” captures not only the considered, formal concert of Powers to achieve a technical step in the management of nuclear weapons, but the disaster it would ward off, the unthinkable and dissolving catastrophe of nuclear annihilation, instant mass death.<sup>11</sup> War puts identity in doubt: survival, survival of one’s companions, survival of one’s world as one knows it, all sources of

<sup>9</sup> Victor Turner, “Symbols in Ndembu Ritual,” in Dorothy Emmet and Alasdair Macintyre [eds], *Sociological Theory and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 150–182, pp. 160–162, citing Sapir, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, v. XIV, 492–3. Turner’s article was reprinted from Max Gluckman [ed], *Closed Systems and Open Minds* (Chicago: Aldine, 1964).

<sup>10</sup> If “test ban” and “CTB” don’t suggest connotations, consider “better dead than red” and “unconditional surrender,” or the struggle among partisans in the abortion controversies around the core symbolic labels “pro-life,” “pro-abortion,” and “pro-choice.”

<sup>11</sup> Turner quotes further from Sapir on condensation symbols. Sapir terms them “highly condensed forms of substitutive behavior for direct expression, allowing for the ready release of emotional tension in conscious or unconscious form.” They are “saturated with emotional quality.”

identity. It is no mystery, then, why War Parties open both doors for the Furies to fly in, the door of reasons, and the door of fears.

Since politically salient claims and Readings achieve salience only by repetition, and because many occasions for utterance are prescribed, the analogy to ritual is not far fetched. What are the rituals of an industrial society in the 1990s—the one thing their people do together—if not their communing with the shades of men who appear, in a cycle of occasions, on the flashing, dancing boxes of sight and sound before which they cluster?

We will now turn to secular abbreviation, speculating how it is complex issues become reduced to concise claims.

### *Simplifications*

In practice we seem to believe that views converge. Differences in viewpoints are submerged. Common elements dominate, and nuance is suppressed. Consider peoples' images of a war, such as WWII. We could adopt a radically individualist understanding: that each person's view of WWII is distinctive, not like, or not quite like, anyone else's. But that position, even if literally true, is not our political or social understanding. Instead, we almost without thinking say that "most people think" or "many people think" such-and-such about the origins of WWII. In talking of "French views of WWII," for example, we typically distinguish just two, or three, or a few more modal views.

It is not just because analysts talk of "schools" that the practice of identifying a few common positions has effects. People *in the episode* also tend to group views, if they think and talk about the matter at all. They identify with some positions, and see others' as different from their own. This has nothing to do with formal organization. It has a great deal to do, however, with the map of possibilities which comes to them in the accounts they hear and read, especially accounts which talk of focal readings, or even imply them. Simply to mention "the Coalition" of the Gulf War, for example, implies a negotiated position among Coalition members, so that any one of us can speak of his position as one which adopts a "Coalition view." And on every subordinate issue—should air war be begun? should Sadaam Hussein be assassinated? should the ground war continue?—the very fact that there is an issue means that there were, for the questions we've cited, focal Readings around "yes" and "no."

Why do opinions cluster? Why, when an issue is sharply debated, do press and public seem to talk as if there were just two or three contending positions? Why is the diversity of views not explored?

First, we speak succinctly. There is a premium on brevity. We do not want to lose the main point. Second, when it comes to making policy choices, we pose alternatives reductively: a main point, or a brief label, stands for the whole. Third, institutions prosper by bringing forth, and circulating, reductive views. They identify themselves simply. They use simplistic claims to distinguish themselves from their competitors. Their purposes then appear coherent (so that members of the institution can be in step, and the institution be immediately intelligible to those outside it).

There are many positions short of adoption of a Reading in its most complete and unqualified form, differences of detail, of intensity, of grounds. Moreover, most of us adopt positions provisionally. And we universally orient ourselves toward inconsistent, or contradictory, or unresolved positions. We observe just that when we cite tolerance of ambiguity as a virtue. Consider the inconsistent positions we might reasonably have held in the weeks before Gulf War II. We could believe that the Emir of Kuwait deserved to be restored because a United Nations member state should not be unilaterally extinguished by another, and have believed at the same time that the Emir should not be restored because he was guardian and symbol of intolerable social practices. As noted in discussing decision, differences are momentarily resolved, in a formal but consequential sense, when decisions are made.

When two accounts of the same episode differ fundamentally, each one taking a different focus, we expect they will also differ in the motives and intentions they attribute, their estimates of relative success, and what they argue should be done next. These differences form recognizable clusters. A person drawn to a focal judgment is likely to be drawn to the subordinate positions associated with it. The Vietnam War offers many examples. After the Tet offensive of January-February 1968 American views of the Vietnam War focused on three questions: did the NLF/North Vietnam succeed or fail? should the United States persist or withdraw? in any case, should the United States augment its forces then in Vietnam? Many who argued for more troops also argued that the NLF/North Vietnam “lost” Tet, squandering its forces in a desperate but unsuccessful effort. Those who had previously argued that the United States should withdraw interpreted the offensive to confirm their position, and opposed increasing US forces.



The Reading—to emphasize the point—is purely notional. We use it as a convenience to explore what lies between individual views, on the one hand, and the formally-decided views of an organization or state, on the other. Of course, some of those to whom we attribute a Reading acknowledge that they share a view with others: they recognize the Reading, and take it as their own.

New Readings form as interpretations are voiced and adjusted. Although a Reading can be a pure appreciation, without causal content, if social action is any part of the subject then the Reading will by definition concern events and causalities.

### *Learning to Read*

People learn ‘what it is appropriate to do in given circumstances’ by being taught, by observing, and by invention: that is what we drew from Schutz, and from Schank and Abelson. By extension, much the same should be true of Readings. A teacher declares that a Reading is true, prompting Learner to repeat it. Or the Learner, listening to people talk around her, hears the Readings which people utter, often incompatible Readings, and is prompted to fashion her own by selection, recombination, and negation. Then there will be times when a Learner confronts an episode for which she has no pre-given accounts. If she acts as people do who require a script for action in circumstances which are strange to them, she will draw on having ‘learned how to learn’. Learners sharpen skills in how to improvise an adequate account in a novel case: when no Reading they have been taught, or have heard, seems to be quite right, they draw on skills in constructing a reading of their own.

On this survey, some Readings are taught, some are observed and imitated, and in time each person comes to a sense how a novel Reading may be devised. People learn that there are widely-held views of episodes, and that on some things that appeared to matter a great deal to grownups or friends inconsistent and even contrary Readings circulated concurrently.

Of course, no person holds only a single Reading. Each is participant in many Readings, some of which are ‘related’ in the sense either that they concern kindred subjects, or derive from shared reasons. Readings *cluster*. Analysts speak of ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ politics. For example, Reagan’s conservatism was associated with a ‘defense buildup’, use of the military against small states abroad, advocacy of

‘Star Wars’ anti-missile defenses, and a disdain for the United Nations and its agencies, positions which fit comfortably together for most of his partisans.

The War Script is a set of ‘normal’ moves and ‘appropriate’ steps in the purposive use of coercive force, distilled from Readings about particular wars, threats, intimidations, seizures and fears. It draws from, and reinforces, both ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ *Reading clusters* in US political culture and the political cultures of many societies. But different people confront different circumstances, so there is room for argument about just what subscript of the War Script may be appropriate for a given state or movement at a particular time. Scripts and Readings supply the unextended classes of appropriate action, and examples how they have been used in the past, but do not say just how they will be adapted and drawn upon when political leadership chooses.

#### *Readings and ‘Public Opinion’*

How do Readings differ from ‘public opinion’? Pollsters seek an adequate surrogate for some public’s views in the coded responses to questions. Their questions typically presume Readings and attempt to match stated views to Readings believed to be current.

Only individuals—neither ‘publics’ nor ‘Reading Groups’—form and hold opinions. Observers who attribute opinions to a group adopt a fiction to gain utility. They want a concise, achievable, and manageable measure.

*The pollster defines one or more ad hoc Readings with each question asked.* The respondent is induced to imagine a specified Reading and to identify how his or her views are located in relationship to the salient term of the Reading, or the salient terms of a set of Readings. When the results of the poll are published, they carry as concealed baggage the pollster’s constitutive act. Polls, which imply that people should have answers to the pollsters’ setpiece questions, may shape Readings in turn.

Polling can also be thought about as highly-structured conversation, in some [restricted] sense akin to talking with citizens. In deft hands, then, polling produces revelatory stories. As an example of the artful use of polls, consider Jerome Bruner’s early work on war—the public opinion study of 1944—which already evidenced his realization that as an episode unfolded it could take on different “meanings” for those who considered it. So he asked of WWII: “Has its meaning changed since its

beginnings in Spain, Ethiopia, and China almost a decade ago?” Similarly, he tried to locate the point at which Americans read Hitler’s aggressions in Europe to mean that the United States should wage war against him:

The overwhelming majority of the American people saw no justification in Hitler’s claims to Danzig and the Polish Corridor; we were fed up with appeasement. The fateful week of September 1, 1939, saw eight in every ten Americans place the blame for the war squarely on Germany.

But sympathy is not action. After Poland we still did not want to get into the war. Yet gradually, step by step, public thinking was changing.

What changed it? Certainly not Pearl Harbor alone. Was it a sense of military or economic expediency? Was it plain fright at what might come after a Nazi victory? Or was it a growth of ideological insight, a growth of understanding of the world’s essential interdependence? . . .

Bruner stood puzzled before several plausible causal claims. He sees that the Reading prepared to aid Britain even at the risk of war surged in strength in the middle of 1940. Hitler’s acts were now interpreted in a new light:

Consider . . . the matter of America’s aid-to-Britain policy. From May, 1940, to November, 1941, the number of people in the United States who were willing to aid Britain even if it involved the risk of getting into the war, doubled—from a third of the country to some seven in every ten Americans . . .

Why the shift? One clue: the really big swing toward aiding England coincides with the period during which the Wehrmacht demonstrated its lightning-like striking power to the world; opinion shifted from 35 per cent in May, 1940, favoring aid to England even if it meant risking war, to 60 per cent four months later. This was the Period of Threat. For the first time since the last war, our sense of security, hitherto so unshaken, was given a crucial jolt. This was the period during which we became convinced that America would have to enter the war.<sup>12</sup>

What is striking about this change is that Hitler made no specific threats to US security. This change was not the result of an attack, or any credible threat to the United States. Waves of Luftwaffe planes attacking England, however, had inserted themselves into the conversation about the war, and the interpretation of Hitler’s motives.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome S. Bruner, *Mandate From the People* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), pp. 21–22. He also considers US attitudes toward the Soviet Union [Chapter VI, pp. 105–125], an interest subsequently represented in *Opinions and Personality* (New York: Wiley, 1956), co-authored with M. Brewster Smith and Robert W. White.

*Readings and Common Experiences*

Many observers will agree that security policy in the United States and Western Europe, in the years after WWII, was shaped by common experience. This dominant Reading remained strong through the Cold War. Robert Jervis, writing of the way in which WWI and WWII shaped public assumptions, explains that the wars satisfied two criteria: they were “highly salient” and they commanded attention “over many years.” “The lessons thus became deeply embedded,” writes Jervis, “and successive groups learned the same beliefs.”<sup>13</sup>

Once launched, such a Reading Group teaches its beliefs to those who have not shared the binding experience, extending its sway even longer.

Wars are not the only large-scale phenomena associated with collective viewpoints. The economic depression of the United States in the 1930s, for example, remained a vivid and politically salient memory in the 1950s and 1960s. In this century war has seared the memories of leaderships and publics alike in China, Japan, the United States, Europe, and the [former] Soviet Union, as well as in any number of states which have experienced regional war and civil war. An author of a persuasive account of the Cold War could rely heavily on the currency of readings of the Hitler war prevalent in the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 260–261, 266.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Kull, reporting interviews with Soviet citizens on nuclear issues, notes that “when I pressed respondents to explain why they felt a need to maintain nuclear parity they would sometimes abruptly start talking about the trauma of World War II. It took me a while to understand that they were not simply changing the subject but were actually answering my question. In some cases they would make the connection more explicit, explaining how they had not been prepared for Hitler and they want to make certain that they do not repeat the mistake.” *Minds at War: Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflicts of Defense Policymakers* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), pp. 290–291. Note also the long-remarked tendency of military men to fight the last war. Cf. Kull, p. 251.

Commenting on the European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign’s argument that seeking security by nuclear means makes a nonsense of the aim, Barry Buzan writes “[G]iven the record of the two world wars, it is hardly surprising that such opinions should be most advanced in Europe.” *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1983), p. 29.

*Reading Dynamics: How Readings Can Be Changed*

The Vietnam War offers a fine example of contesting collective understandings.

From the mid-1960s to mid-1970s US society was riven with dispute about the Vietnam War. There were two clear Readings, one committed to withdrawal, the other to supporting the President, perhaps even to the point of ‘victory’. Critics charged that the United States had forced an immoral war for no clear ends. The United States withdrew, and the Saigon authorities, despite continued US arms supplies, collapsed. The US Senate set aside the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (amid a general recognition that Congress had been misled about that incident, and therefore had been conned into approving the war) and passed a War Powers Act to limit future presidential excursions. Events appeared to confirm interpretations of the Withdrawal Reading. One could say, in 1974 or 1975, that the Vietnam War had been *discredited*.

Six years later Ronald Reagan won the Presidency, and offered a new interpretation of the Vietnam War. He represented the war as proper, a correct step to resist Communist aggression, a war undercut by an irresponsible opposition at home. Events were now said to have confirmed the Presidential Reading. The war was, in short, *recredited*.

How are we to understand this maneuver? The Reagan Administration sponsored a *reading* of the Vietnam War which reversed the reading of 1975. Those who held to concepts and slogans discredited in 1975—“preserving democracy in South Vietnam,” “resisting Communist aggression,” “preventing the fall, like dominoes, of democracies in Southeast Asia and beyond”—were now told that they had been right. Their underlying assumption was declared again: Moscow and Washington were locked in a world struggle, in which radical movements served Soviet interests. Reagan created a different *context* for military preparation and military policy. Necessity—he said—required readiness to assert military force abroad. These moves at the level of Party and the Center meant renewed respectability for the Presidential Reading.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Murray Edelman attributes this change to “new problems” seizing people’s attention. “After defeat in Vietnam, past military ventures became suspect for a time and future ones even more so; and after Reagan’s election, a part of the public repudiated these suspicions of military strategies and reinvented a future in which military might guarantees peace.” *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 29.

In 1990–91, preparing its moves in the Gulf War, the Bush Administration further reinterpreted Vietnam. Avoiding “another Vietnam” was a maxim descended from the Withdrawal Reading, with the meaning that the United States should not intervene abroad in support of an unpopular and corrupt government. The Bush Administration, taking a theme from complaints of the Presidential Reading that the US military had been bound and tied in Vietnam, made the phrase mean that a US expeditionary force should be ample and free to fight. In March 1991, localities merged celebrating Gulf War “victory” with honoring Vietnam War veterans.

US understanding of Nicaragua offers a second rich example of changing Readings.

In 1979 the Sandinista movement ousted Nicaragua’s long-standing dictatorship. Some of the dictatorship’s henchmen began a military effort to overthrow the Sandinista government, first from the Nicaraguan countryside, but increasingly from camps abroad. This struggle lasted ten years, largely because of support from the Reagan Administration. Alongside its war between Sandinistas and *contras*—and as an integral part of it—the Reagan Presidency launched an interpretive struggle in the United States. Against all evidence, even against rational possibility, Reagan cast Nicaragua as a grave danger.<sup>16</sup> The effect was to create two Readings: one which agreed, and one which did not. Was the Sandinista movement indigenously Nicaraguan—independent of the Soviet Union and focused on social and economic aims inside Nicaragua—or an instrument of aggressive Soviet policy? And if Nicaragua threatened the United States, what should be done?<sup>17</sup>

A third broad Reading—including many who agreed that the Sandinistas should be overthrown—held that US troops should not be sent to war in Nicaragua. Some members of the Reagan Administration considered direct intervention, but most understood that committing US forces would not win public approval. That left war by proxy, for which there was a Reading large enough to keep some *contra* funding alive in

<sup>16</sup> On this case, see Bruce D. Larkin [ed], *Vital Interests: The Soviet Issue in U.S. Central American Policy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> The answer mattered, because Reagan asked Congress to pay for the proxy war to overthrow the Sandinistas. In fact, through most of the 1980s the Reagan Administration ran such a war—undeclared, indirect, and unsuccessful. [How it did so is part of the story of the Iran-*Contra* scandal, with its “cake in the shape of a key” and other bizarres.] Our point here is limited to illustrating the notional Group of those holding a shared view.

Congress. Since memory tends to suppress the improbable, it may help to remind ourselves just what Reagan claimed in reconceiving Nicaragua:

My fellow citizens, the matter that brings me before you today is a grave one and concerns my most solemn duty as President. It is the cause of freedom in Central America and the national security of the United States ...

The young men and women of the democratic resistance fight inside Nicaragua today in grueling mountain and jungle warfare. They confront a Soviet-equipped army, trained and led by Cuban officers. They face murderous helicopter gunships without any means of defense. And still they volunteer. And still their numbers grow ...

Eventually, we ... will have to confront the reality of a Soviet military beachhead inside our defense perimeters—about 500 miles from Mexico ...

My friends in the House, for over 200 years the security of the United States has depended on the safety of unthreatened borders, north and south. Do we want to be the first elected leaders in U.S history to put our borders at risk?<sup>18</sup>

Other Readings were in play, whose members Reagan would enlist, or confront. Carter's Caribbean and Central American policy had been a target of the Reagan campaign. And Vietnam remained a central issue for Readings in the 1980s. Reagan's initiative was a move to line up—to bring into overlap with one another—Reading Groups which saw the world as a US-Soviet confrontation, supported the war in Vietnam, opposed Carter, voted for Reagan, and backed overthrow of the Sandinistas. These links turned on claiming a “Carter failure” in Nicaragua; but Vietnam had been said to show that outcomes were determined by internal political forces, not US policy. Only by revising the verdict on Vietnam could Reagan hold Carter responsible for Nicaragua. In this perverse way one misreading led to another, and the Cold War was again confirmed.

My friends in the Congress, with democracy still a fragile root in Central America—with Mexico undergoing an economic crisis—can we responsibly ignore the long-term danger to American interests posed by a communist

<sup>18</sup> President Ronald Reagan, “Why Democracy Matters in Central America,” address to the nation from the White House, Washington, D.C., June 24, 1986. US Department of State, *Current Policy* No. 850. Reagan also contested the Sandinistas' claim to the revolutionary tradition:

The Sandinistas call these freedom fighters *contras*—for “counterrevolutionaries.” But the real counterrevolutionaries are the Sandinista *comandantes*, who betrayed the hopes of the Nicaraguan revolution and sold out their country to the Soviet empire.

The *comandantes* even betrayed the memory of the Nicaraguan rebel leader Sandino, whose legacy they falsely claim. For the real Sandino—because he was a genuine nationalist—was opposed to communism.

Nicaragua, backed by the Soviet Union, and dedicated—in the words of its own leaders—to a “revolution without borders?”<sup>19</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Of course, politics cannot take place without talk about views current in the polity. There are everyday ways of talking about them. They are implied in phrases such as ‘public opinion’, ‘the mood of the country’, ‘a rising chorus ...’, ‘pleased with the state of the economy’, ‘better off than four years ago’. When talk turns to specific policies, people’s disparate viewpoints are identified with salient core opinions: in this text, these are called Readings. Public discussion requires that complex points of view be named and profiled, so that alternative judgments can be compared.

Among the Readings current in a society are some which are *scripts*, specifying appropriate conduct for situations demanding coordinate action. We stressed planning and concision when we said that

When people talk about events, their speech contains both express and tacit claims about intent, cause, performance, effect and further consequence. People’s stories about events are causal stories.

Readings are always stories. When policy is their subject, they always include or imply causal claims. And companion Readings form around proposals for action, which are then gathered into plans.

Analysts who study war also form Groups, except that they write and talk consciously and explicitly about the Readings they credit and their membership in Reading Groups. When their Readings are elaborate and interrelated, a distinctive complex of overlapping observations and claims, we can speak of that Reading Group as a ‘school’. The Readings which they offer and adopt take on names such as ‘argument’, ‘hypothesis’, ‘model’, and ‘theory’. In the next chapter we will consider several claims about war and studying war which are abstract and general—‘theoretical’—Readings.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* On the doubtful pedigree of the phrase “revolution without borders,” which was repeatedly cited by the Reagan Administration, see *Vital Interests*, above.



## 9 Theories as Stories

Does war exhibit patterned recurrence, causally connected and explainable? Some works on ‘war theory’ and ‘war causes’ say that it does. We have proposed to treat such claims as ‘stories’. We agree that such stories help us to talk about war, and to direct our examination of wars to interesting and revelatory features, but do not believe that efforts to answer the question ‘why is there war?’ have demonstrated necessary regularities. Insisting on some distance from such claims, we say that considering them as ‘stories’ exposes their arbitrariness, cautions against the appearance of certainty, captures their own reliance on accounts in turn, and warns against using them as guides to the future. ‘War theories’ are best understood as stories, not as something akin to scientific findings. Their central content is not demonstrated rule, but useful fiction.

In this chapter we will consider some familiar endeavors to generalize about war and war studies. An academic who thinks of herself as a builder of ‘war theory’, or a professor who ‘teaches international relations theory’, might object that the treatment which follows is not only irreverent, but fails to appreciate what constitutes theory *in sensu strictu*, and neglects conscientious efforts to achieve rigor of concept, proposition, and method. Objections in that vein would of course be correct. After all, good theory is the holy grail of social science. It is not our purpose to disturb anyone who understands social inquiry in that sense. Instead, we just propose to look at some generalizations and causal claims about war, to illustrate what is distinctive in taking ‘war theories’ as fictions, as simple narratives. We wish to cultivate the case for taking stories seriously.

This text places special weight on people taking the political initiative to negotiate their understandings and projects. It is therefore appropriate that our first subject is the ‘democratic peace’.

*The Democratic Peace*

The claim that democratic states do not war with one another offers an excellent starting-point. It is well-confirmed, points to what must be missing when war does occur, and shows a way—global democratization—to end war altogether. If there is any promising generalization in the ‘war causes’ literature, any claim which approaches a ‘law’, this is it. Is it simple begrudgery, then, to insist that the democratic peace is a ‘useful fiction’ rather than a ‘ruleful finding’?

As shown by two excellent studies<sup>1</sup> making the case for the democratic peace, there is much at stake in how the ‘democratic peace’ is defined. What states are ‘democracies’? Authors identify several complementary criteria. The democracies must be ‘stable’. They must have been stable for several years (at least three). Their democracy must be real, in both choice and accountability of authoritative decision-makers, not merely formal. The political culture must tolerate dissent and accept defeat. There must be well-practiced experience in negotiation. And each political leadership must perceive the other to be bringing into the argument dispositions much like its own. Given a war which seems at first glance to be a ‘war between democratic states’, these criteria present a consistent way to narrow the definition and exclude offending cases.

It is important how much the ‘democratic peace’ rests not on formal institutions but on well-established expectations and practices. Spencer R. Weart summarizes that

All these highly regular generalizations can be explained by a simple proposition. A leadership group relies on a political culture, by which I mean a particular set of beliefs about handling conflicts with others (beliefs stable enough to be linked to compatible customary practices). Leaders tend to take the beliefs and practices that they use domestically with fellow citizens and apply them in conflicts abroad. In particular, republican leaders are inclined to use the practices associated with a republican political culture, namely tolerant, nonviolent public contestation, aiming at mutual accommodation for the common good.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), and Spencer R. Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Weart, p. 294. A similar argument is made by John M. Owen, who credits the “liberal ideas undergirding liberal democracies ... The liberal commitment to individual freedom gives rise to foreign policy ideology and governmental institutions that work together to produce democratic peace. Ideologically, liberals trust those states they consider fellow liberal democracies and see no reason to fight them.” “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” in *International Security*, v 19 n 2 (Fall 1994), pp. 87–125, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al

But it is not enough a leadership is disposed to act this way: it must anticipate that the leadership with which it is in conflict will be so disposed too.

The only additional factor, a crucial one, is whether republican leaders accept a foreign leadership as “ingroup,” comparable to their fellow citizens at home. Peaceful negotiation is dependably practiced only among such people. Fortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, republican leaders grant this fellowship wherever they perceive the foreigners’ fundamental political beliefs and behavior to be similar to their own. In a number of cases we saw violence enter exactly at the point where this perception was lacking. The important influence that one side’s perception (or misperception) of the other’s political stance has on decisions to make war or peace is yet another historical regularity that cannot be explained by purely structural factors.<sup>3</sup>

This discussion began with a story about two sovereign states in conflict with each other and became a story about a single polity with established, reciprocally understood expectations about how participants in the polity resolve differences. In effect Weart concludes that regions in a stable polity will not wage civil war against each other. That is not so surprising. Telling the story this way implies a criticism of the original focus on the sovereign state, as one of a pair of sovereign states, to the exclusion of a more plastic and imaginative sense of what constitutes a polity.

Could the pair of states whose leaders make war on each other be thought of as a single polity *riven by instability*?

The polity formed by two (or more) states which will not war with each other was recognized decades ago and given the name “no-war security community.”<sup>4</sup> Examples of such systems are the Nordic states and the US-Canada pair. What authors writing about the democratic peace accomplish is to show that the natural constituents of a broad no-war security community are those states which practice non-coercive dispute resolution internally and whose leaders expect their community partners to do the same.

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[eds], *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 173–174.

<sup>3</sup> Weart, pp. 294–295.

<sup>4</sup> On the concept of a ‘security community’, see Karl Deutsch et al., “Political Community and the North Atlantic Area,” in *International Political Communities* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1966), pp. 1–91. A security community is “one in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way. If the entire world were integrated as a security-community, wars would be automatically eliminated.” [p. 2].

*A propos*, Weart tells us he “chanced upon one more spectacular regularity,” that “republics, and only republics, tend to form durable leagues with their own kind.”<sup>5</sup> But a ‘league’ is nothing but a ‘no-war security community’ formalized and sworn.

Note that, at least for Weart, everything hinges on how the *leadership perceives the dispositions of the other*. To stress the obvious: this focus is not on the State, or the State’s form, but on individuals bringing their prejudgments to the discussion and decision.

About to engage in discussion of a conflict between them, the leaderships of the parties will rely on their experience in negotiation. The term we have used to describe a planning template for future action is *script*. Weart writes of negotiating experience in just that way:

In sum, the political culture of republican leaders brings them to follow as a rule of thumb the expectation that in disputes with foreign leaders who share their principles, they will be able to negotiate a satisfactory solution. It is not idealism that makes them follow this practice. Getting objective information about how foreign rivals are likely to behave is so difficult that rules of thumb can be the most efficient way to cut through the clutter of international relations. As experience shows, the practice works.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, both Weart and Bruce Russett, in *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, rely on selective summaries of historical cases. Russett and his collaborators are intent on listing and coding (city-states of ancient Greece, post-WWII state dyads, selected non-industrial societies) and establishing correlations, but whenever they come to a difficult case, or wish to clarify varieties of participation, they appeal to a more detailed characterization of the case at hand.

Weart, director of the Center for the History of Physics at the American Institute of Physics, is expressly aware of his reliance on story:

This book is a foray into the region between history and political science ... Political scientists will be annoyed by the stories I tell with no precise conclusions. Please bear in mind that (as the historian Charles Gillespie once said) “historians are better than their theories”; narrative gives an understanding of human affairs that generalizations never quite capture.<sup>7</sup>

Russett and Weart are story-tellers themselves, as are any analysts who reexamine cases—evidence—to draw new, more refined distinctions. In the ongoing debate about the ‘democratic peace’, Edward D. Mansfield

<sup>5</sup> Weart, p. 294.

<sup>6</sup> Weart, p. 295.

<sup>7</sup> Weart, p. vii.

and Jack Snyder focus on states during years in which the state form is changing. They argue that “democratization increases the probability of war,” and that the passages possible in Russia and China mean that “it is especially important to have a theory about democratizing great powers.” When they present their findings, they do so by displaying four illustrative cases involving “great powers” and even then are careful to stipulate that they “do not claim that these great powers are necessarily representative of all democratizing states.”<sup>8</sup> This seems a wise caveat when Russia and China are considered, since both are multi-national entities founded on empires, subjects of ongoing dispute about ‘exceptionalism’. Still the point Mansfield and Snyder make is interesting and persuasive, not because of their apparatus (labeling states democratic, anocratic, and autocratic, and then measuring correlations between war and states’ *changing* form) but because they can use cases to show that what they describe *occurs* and to offer plausible accounts of its reasons in those cases.

#### *The ISQ Debate on Method*

The June 1985 issue of *International Studies Quarterly* published a brief but focused debate on method, papers by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Stephen Krasner, and Robert Jervis.<sup>9</sup>

The issues among them came down to a claim by Bueno de Mesquita for theory empirically well-based, relying on “large-N rather than small-N studies,” meeting the tests set by Imré Lakatos, so growing more comprehensive, and achieving a formal deductive structure. “Formal, explicit theorizing takes intellectual, if not temporal, precedence over empiricism.”

All agreed on the need to base conclusions in evidence. (Elsewhere Jervis has taken deterrence theorists to task for failing to pay attention to empirical data.)<sup>10</sup> Krasner, while genuflecting to Lakatos, declares

<sup>8</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War,” in *International Security*, v 20 n 1, Summer 1995, pp. 5–38, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al. [eds], *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 221–254, pp. 234 and 236–237.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Stephen Krasner, and Robert Jervis, “Symposium: Methodological Foundations of the Study of International Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly* 29:2 119–154 (June 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Robert Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” in *World Politics*, 1979, pp. 289–324.

himself “skeptical about the possibility of comparing theories which are drawn from different research programs”: the problem of theory incommensurability. Moreover, he holds that ‘large-N studies’ are “only one of several approaches,” and not necessarily “inherently more progressive.”

This short exchange illustrates the problems of a single *a priori* standard for method. Bueno de Mesquita’s preference for quantification aside, adopting his position requires holding a number of assumptions, all doubtful: that the ‘large-N’ consists of cases sufficiently similar that grouping them together does not introduce a fatal distortion, that the qualities (‘variables’) extracted from the ‘large-N’ cases are something akin to what they appear to be, that the insights generated by this method will be of greater ‘value’ than those generated by close study of one or a few cases, that nothing of compelling significance—such that taking it into account would lead to different conclusions—has been omitted, and that regularities discerned should be able to be fit into a hierarchical structure of explanatory propositions, embracable within a comprehensive theory. Of course, skepticism that these assumptions are sound is no reason to refuse Bueno de Mesquita the right to work on these terms. But others—those following different ‘research programs’—are also free to declare the grounds on which they propose to be judged. It is not that any grounds at all will do, but that the grounds *appropriate to a given research program* are themselves *open and subject to negotiation*.

### *Balance of Power*

Kenneth Waltz, after canvassing inadequate theory in *Man, the State, and War*, tries to untie the Gordian Knot by turning to Rousseau. Waltz seeks both the key to wars’ causes, and guidance for statesmen. He finds, following Rousseau, that “the absence of an authority above states to prevent and adjust the conflicts inevitably arising from particular wills means that war is inevitable.” And he concludes that

Rousseau’s explanation of the origin of war among states is, in broad outline, the final one so long as we operate within a nation-state system. It is a final explanation because it does not hinge on accidental causes—irrationalities in men, defects in states—but upon his theory of the framework within which *any* accident can bring about a war ... From this point of view it is social structure—institutionalized restraints and institutionalized methods of altering and adjusting interests—that counts ...

Applied to international politics this becomes, in words previously used to summarize Rousseau, that wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them. Rousseau's analysis explains the recurrence of war without explaining any given war.

The corresponding prescription is balance of power:

The peace strategy of any one country must depend on the peace or war strategies of all other countries. As competition in international politics becomes more intense, a process that none of the arch competitors acting alone can prevent, the peace-loving states face the necessity of balancing between too little and too much strength, between too many failures that strengthen the potential enemy and too many successes that scare him unduly.

Waltz' world is completely defined by two claims: first, that as long as nation-states exist war is inevitable ("given imperfect states in a condition of anarchy, crises will arise") so that any one state is subject to "the peace or war strategies" of all others; and, second, that states will act to balance, either out of policy (guided by theory) or in response to threats (compelling in practice).<sup>11</sup> Therefore by smart policy, or in response to need, states will prepare to balance: that is, to arm for war.

In this story, then, characters—sometimes—choose war. Their motives may include greed and the wish for dominion. States attack and defend out of reason, and passion, and the two combined.<sup>12</sup> Though "the use of reason would seem to require the adoption of a doctrine of 'non-recourse to force'" the fact is that "peace is the primary goal of few men or states." Behind issues of gain and loss is the ultimate issue of domination and servitude:

The issue in a given dispute may not be: Who shall gain from it? It may instead be: Who shall dominate the world? In such circumstances, the best course of even reasonable men is difficult to define; their ability always to contrive solutions without force, impossible to assume.<sup>13</sup>

So the plight of the 'reasonable man' is that he is always in danger of enslavement, of which denial of goods and land and daily security would be but a precursor. Circumstance may leave no alternative to enslavement but force. But when the reasonable man threatens force, or even prepares to do so, he walks the narrow line between too little, which fails to deter, and too much, which inflames fears and hostilities. This is the 'security dilemma'.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, pp. 182, 220, 222–223, 231–232.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 234, 236.

Waltz' story, as we read it, compels the reasonable man to choose between enslavement and *collusion with a system of force*. Then the distinction between the reasonable man and the original agent of force is blurred; and the ignorance of all—will I be enslaved if I do nothing? have I armed enough to deter?—cannot be overcome until after the time to act has passed. No one—no participant, no member of the audience, not even the theorist—knows the outcome. So Waltz speaks in two voices, sometimes as the carrier of truth about the world, sometimes as the oracle of outcomes he cannot yet know. And it is of course the power of this story that it seems consistent with so many stories of particular wars of the past, and immune from disproof for the future.

### *Misperception*

If it matters what people *believe* about their situation—and in the practical world, and for this book, it does—then there can be *several understandings of the same circumstances*. How are we to understand the 'Rashomon Effect' in studying war?

A subtle and effective use of psychological concept to illuminate war informs the work of Robert Jervis. In two major works, *The Logic of Images* and *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,<sup>14</sup> Jervis explores how understandings of episodes and enemies display distortion, drawing parties into conflict against their rational interests.

When Jervis writes of 'misperception', he posits players who *fall short* of a standard of clarity and rational understanding. Their flaw—often tragic—is getting things wrong. They have erred, and we know better. Our understanding—objective, distanced, informed by historical study—shows that the player *held a view he would not have held if he were one of us and had known what we know now*. Of course ignorance is a common source of misunderstanding, but here the focus is on *misperception*, reading signs wrong. In some perceptionist accounts, the subject is prone to a *recurrent characteristic error*, a categorical, repeated misreading, discernible to the observer's privileged eye.

'Misperception' implies the reality of a *correct* perception, to which the misperception can be compared. So any claim about war which employs the concept of 'misperception' strictly implies a knowable truth,

<sup>14</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), and *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).



a fact or array of facts, from which the misperception departs, or which it disregards. Here ‘misperception’ becomes sticky, the virtue of ‘story’ rather than ‘rule’ more obvious. Saying *this is the present situation* is a claim of certainty, or some approximation of certainty. It claims a strict correspondence between the *actual* or *real* situation and the description given of it. The description is, at least, *good enough* and *not in error*.

What can we know and what warrants can we offer that it is knowable? For the discussion here it may be enough to distinguish what is ‘easy’ and what is ‘hard’ to know, and what is strictly unknowable, though it may be guessed. For example, it is easy to know that an army deploys a given missile at stipulated locations; it is hard to know what arguments its General Staff and their civilian governors have exchanged; and while their openness to negotiation may be guessed, and the guesses based on good reasons, whether they will agree to negotiate cannot be known because it lies in the future.

A shrewd analyst can speculate about what the ‘enemy’ will do, which is telling a story. She cannot be said to ‘misperceive’ the enemy’s intentions, or their willingness to endure hardship in defense of their homes, because such matters are not available. On the other hand, if she did not take into account the possibility that the enemy would tenaciously defend itself, she could hardly be said to have been shrewd.

### *Nuclear Deterrence*

How could a prudent state be secure if potential adversaries were armed with nuclear weapons? Thinking through this problem required *imagining* a strategic contest. Fred Kaplan has sketched dramatically how Bernard Brodie and other scholars, many from the University of Chicago and Yale University, drew on known facts and reasoned expectations to speculate on the nuclear future.<sup>15</sup> Just six weeks after Hiroshima, at a conference organized by the University of Chicago, Brodie was exposed to economist Jacob Viner’s insistence that “retaliation in equal terms is unavoidable and in this sense the atomic bomb is a war deterrent, a peace-making force.” Brodie developed his views in essays circulated in February 1946 and published, in June, among contributions to *The Absolute Weapon*. Here Brodie set out the centrality of deterrence, in a paragraph frequently and deservedly quoted:

<sup>15</sup> Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), especially pp. 1–32.

Thus, the first and most vital step in any American security program for the age of atomic bombs is to take measures to guarantee to ourselves in case of attack the possibility of retaliation in kind. The writer in making that statement is not for the moment concerned about who will *win* the next war in which atomic bombs are used. Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.<sup>16</sup>

The implicit method of Brodie and his cohort was to isolate the most important qualities which nuclear weapons brought to strategy and to reason from them. They judged, correctly, that if one state could create the atom bomb others would follow suit. They argued that there was no *defense* against nuclear attack; that cities, as the most telling targets, would be struck first; that after prime targets had been exhausted, numbers of nuclear warheads would not matter much; and that the state which was attacked first would have time to retaliate in kind.

This was a policy of self-reliance. It assumed a program to build and deploy nuclear weapons. A contrary school argued that containing the threat of nuclear war required *political* measures, steps to place nuclear affairs under *governance* and prevent a nuclear arms race. Their conclusions showed an understanding of the bomb as a technical fact and isolation of the key points at which governance could be applied. Foremost among examples of a politico-technical approach was the March 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal report, *A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy*, commissioned by the US Department of State and the basis of the 'Baruch Plan' later submitted to the United Nations.

The two schools answered two different questions. Authors of *International Control* asked how the spread of nuclear weapons and their deployment could be prevented. Brodie and those who contributed to 'deterrence' assumed the bomb would spread, and asked how states could help themselves in a nuclear world. The first assumed an interest in cooperation, and that cooperation was therefore possible. The second assumed that conflict would be recapitulated, and that absent reliable cooperation a state's only recourse was to threat.

Striking about both bodies of work, those of the early academic strategists and those of participants in drafting *International Control*, is

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Brodie, "Implications for Military Policy," in Frederick S. Dunn, Bernard Brodie, Arnold Wolfers, Perce E. Corbett, and William T. R. Fox (Bernard Brodie [ed.]), *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, Brace 1946), pp. 70–107, p. 76.

how well they got to the heart of the matter. Some of their clear, convinced judgments stand as prescient. They agreed on key points—for example, that others would soon learn to build the bomb—even as they proposed quite different policies. And both groups sketched scenarios. Their arguments were couched in expectations how state leaderships would respond to hypothetical circumstance in the future. They saw human capacities as complex, not simplistic. If the irrational in men would breed weapons programs, rational understanding of retaliation would achieve ‘peace’. If the rational in men would lead them to accept international control, they would put in place prudent precautions against deception. Both dealt in plight, anticipated sequences, sought resolution.

*‘Conventional’ Deterrence*

As George Quester reminded readers of *Deterrence Before Hiroshima*, deterrence is a concept more general than that of nuclear deterrence.<sup>17</sup> Any threat of retaliation may deter. A small boy can deter a bully by threatening to call in his big brother. If ‘deterrence theory’ is to be persuasive, it must be shown to capture practice with some fidelity. Many detailed empirical studies have been undertaken to discern relationships among context, application, and outcome. Was the situation suited to a deterrent move? Did those seeking to deter do it right? Was the challenger deterred?<sup>18</sup>

It is usually easy to tell that a challenger did not carry out the assertive, unwanted step which the defender sought to deter. But why? To avoid the *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy, an analyst must be convinced that the challenger, choosing restraint, did not do so for another reason. What of the intermediate case, in which the challenger *modifies* the challenge in order to sidestep defender’s effort to deter?

But even in the case in which challenger does take the unwanted step, the analysis is not complete, for it must also be shown that the defender *really did take the steps necessary to deter and did so in circumstances suited to successful deterrence*. The Lebow-Orme controversy, in which they dispute whether the outcomes of specific

<sup>17</sup> George Quester, *Deterrence Before Hiroshima* (New York: Wiley, 1966).

<sup>18</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); John Orme, “Deterrence Failures: A Second Look,” in *International Security*, v 11 n 4, Spring 1987, pp. 96–124; Richard Ned Lebow, “Deterrence Failure Revisited,” in *International Security*, v 12 n 1, Summer 1987, pp. 197–213.

cases confirm or fail to confirm the deterrence hypothesis, shows how difficult it is to achieve a single, agreed reading of complex empirical cases.<sup>19</sup> The canonical conditions for successful deterrence—(a) defender has the *capacity* to carry out the threat, (b) defender could reasonably be believed to have the *will* to do so, if deterrence fails, and (c) the deterrent threat is *effectively communicated* to the challenger—are all open to selection and contested reading of facts.

These difficulties are not just issues of the skill or scholarship of the analysts, though through successive exchanges the analysts could pinpoint how they disagree, and critics could challenge those readings. The difficulties arise because *even the existence of a given military capability does not mean it will achieve a certain effect at a future time*, because *future will is never open to closure in the present*, because there is rarely evidence to show unambiguous communication of the threat, and because *the challenger may decide to go ahead anyway*. “Damn the torpedoes!”

Not only do scholarly analysts retell each case differently, but the conclusions which they draw about deterrence typically also differ. Whatever they say is shown about deterrence is itself a new story; and when analysts differ, there are several such stories on the table.

So it is not enough that the challenger be ‘rational’ for deterrence to have the desired effect. The challenger might be rational, but act on an interpretation of the context quite different from that of the defender, or—on plausible grounds—come to a conclusion about defender’s will different from that later established by events. Neither defender, seeking to deter, nor the challenger can ever get away from ongoing interpretation, expressed through stories of past events or the anticipated ‘playing out’ of the challenge and deterrent threat.

If deterrence works, under stated conditions, in ‘conventional’ confrontations, is that reason to believe that nuclear deterrence can be stably maintained? And if it *does not work* in conventional confrontations, might nuclear deterrence—threats manyfold greater in severity—work nonetheless?

### *Sequential Pattern*

An historian may argue that there are strong homologies between a crisis, threatening war, and a prior war between the parties. The claim is

<sup>19</sup> Lebow and Orme, above.

that the new crisis *recapitulates* structures, commitments, beliefs, attachments, interests, dispositions, and calls to arms which characterized the earlier episode. The parties' reasons for making war in their first encounter are reasons they might, or do, make war in the second. We could call this a *theory of sequential war*.

Story figures here twice. This work argues that we should look to the stories circulating among those 'on the brink of war' to see how war is shown as *appropriate* in such circumstances, and to see *how the 'enemy' is characterized*. So our approach expects to find stories which invoke prior conflict between the parties, for it confirms our view that such stories carry the readiness to war. An historian may collect evidence that stories of the past were *recirculated* at the time of a later crisis, when a country 'lay at the brink of war'. Such evidence supports the main arguments of this study.

But there is a second level of story as well. The historian's story itself—or its daily-conversation equivalent among those considering war—implies a view about the naturalness, the comprehensibility, of war following war, even if it does not go so far as to voice a call for war once again. The observation that successive wars form a meaningful sequence cannot escape carrying the idea that war is *the course the participants will choose* in such circumstances. Even if outsiders recoil at the tragedy of repeated war, they appreciate that making war, under those circumstances, is believed *appropriate* by the warmakers. And among the participants themselves an observed sequence becomes bound up in belief that war is in fact the appropriate step, perhaps the inevitable step, to be pursued.

There are any number of studies which adopt some version of a theory of sequential war. Among commonplace modern sequences are

- the World Wars: World War I and World War II, sometimes including the Spanish Civil War and the Cold War
- the Balkan Wars: 1912, 1914, and 1991– ..
- the East-West wars: Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan
- Franco-German Wars: Franco-Prussian War, WWI and WWII

Kevin Phillips argues that there is intimate sequence connecting the English Civil War, American Revolution, and the US Civil War. Similarities bound partisans of the opposing camps, similarities of ethnicity, religion, commercial interest, and declared identity. But he also

illustrates by example the readiness of participants to invoke by name the contending forces of the prior wars, and their vivid memories and myths of earlier rights and wrongs.<sup>20</sup> And he is led to conclude that the issues between North and South were not ‘compromisable’:

... since William H. Seward, Lincoln’s future secretary of state, described the imminent U.S. Civil War as an “irrepressible conflict” ... arguments have been made for the flukish or unnecessary character of the English Civil War and the War for American Independence.

Once, quite possibly. Twice, conceivably. But not *three* times. Wars with the continuity of these are not accidents, needless eruptions, or the product of a misled and gullible public. Their origins go deeper. The God of English-speaking Protestants was, as we have seen, “a God of Warr.” The English-speaking peoples had used armed conflict to achieve external success from Crécy and Agincourt to the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Small wonder that three times during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, that same resort to arms would be accepted—after long debate, and when no other course remained—to resolve profound *internal* differences.

The parallels between the English Civil War and the American Civil War ... support the continuity and irrepressibility interpretations.<sup>21</sup>

### *Conclusion*

There is a conversational character to the recurrent exchange between theories, as stories of one kind, and accounts of human affairs, stories of a more particular kind. The very phrase ‘theory and practice’ suggests how closely they are knit together.

Earlier we emphasized embedded causal claims. They are focused by the need to act, and therefore the need to decide, and our political institutions are designed to achieve action in a milieu of competing—and often undecidable—causal claims. This is especially true of war.

But—to stress the point—we do decide. There is also an intuitive sense that ‘good’ decisions and ‘bad’ decisions precede action: that there are *reasons* for choosing one claim rather than another. If that is the case, there must be some connection between the ‘useful stories’, carriers of claims, and the distinction between ‘good’ decisions and ‘bad’ decisions. If the question “do I adopt this claim as my own?” always implies having an answer to the question ‘why?’, then we also need to consider what constitute sound and credible responses to the ‘why?’ challenge.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Phillips, above.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339–340.

# 10 Reasons

## *Good Reasons*

The object of this chapter is to address the question “what are ‘good reasons’?” Or we might ask: “if I consider two accounts to be inconsistent, why should I adopt one account rather than the other?” Or: “Although these accounts appear to be incompatible, what should I do if there are ‘good reasons’ for holding each of them?”

These problems are posed because we have made four claims about stories—accounts and plans—which establish them as central to war choice. We said, first, that we learn about the world from stories that we read and hear. Second, we render novel accounts based upon the stories we learn, restating them for ourselves, or offering them to others. Third, in conversation with other people we negotiate stories, assess and consider them together. And, fourth, we make up plans for the future which are story-like.

On each of these occasions we are active, making judgments. A story implies the question “do you believe this?”, or “do you believe any of this?” As we have pointed out before, one way to get at what is most important in our question is to apply the adoption test: “would I adopt this story as my own?”

At each point you or I must make a judgment: on hearing or reading, on restating, when discussing with another person, and when creating plans. Just setting it out in this systematic way suggests that somewhat different types of judgment are called for at each point. Our ‘first reaction’ need not be fully-considered. But when we form a judgment, there is greater reflection, especially if we intend to utter it. And when we talk it over, or talk about several related stories, we not only speak our judgment but may alter it (and shift among the stories) as we go

along. Finally, we come to create a plan, or plans, and to choose their elements; we may have to select one or two plans for further consideration; what shall we do? The successive occasions differ in how we are committed to our judgments. An uttered judgment is *on the table*, no longer private. Moreover, it has been part of the action of uttering it, and where once it was unshared now it is part of an ongoing social transaction. And in the case of plans: ultimately we act; so our judgment is enmeshed in the world.

*'Good Reasons' in Judgment of Particular Intent*

On 7 May 1999 a US Air Force aircraft launched a bomb which entered the embassy of the People's Republic of China in Belgrade. Three inside were killed, and some 20 injured. Soon press accounts quoted a US official that a different target was intended.

Should I accept this account as my own? My first response: I will wait and see.

Soon there are further reports. The United States strives to present a consistent story, and to reinforce it by revealing details of the alleged mistake. News accounts from Beijing tell of Chinese skepticism. When I discuss this with my colleagues, one of them points out that the three Chinese who were killed were journalists. Another claims to have seen a report in which two of the 'journalists' were described as intelligence agents. We note that the Chinese seem adamant that the attack must have been deliberate. Demonstrators are formed up in front of the US Embassy in Beijing. I conclude that I can repeat what I have heard, but must withhold a conclusion.

Then I read more elaborate accounts, with claims about a US officer having warned that the site might be wrong. But when I meet with my friends again, they show me a report that this one attack was the first and only target, among many thousands, proposed by the Central Intelligence Agency alone. Details trickle out, typically unverified, and for the typical reader unverifiable. One claims that "the agent on the ground in Belgrade gave the wrong location—resulting in the embassy being bombed."<sup>1</sup> On 24 June US officials said that the bomb had apparently destroyed the Embassy's intelligence section, leading the Washington correspondent of

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Starr, ABCNews.com, 20 May 1999. <http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/embassy990520.html> [seen 3 June 2000]. That story does not figure in later accounts.



*The Guardian* to say that “this could explain why China continues to claim that the bombing was not accidental.”<sup>2</sup> One story had it that Chinese intelligence was thought to be aiding Serbia in identifying the flight paths of US aircraft. The evidence is circumstantial, and not conclusive, but it seems extraordinary that the CIA would be so interested in a site linked to military sales abroad, the alleged ‘actual’ target. I conclude that the Chinese claim of ‘deliberate attack’ cannot be dismissed.

The US position is detailed and specific. On 17 June 1999 the US Deputy Secretary of State, Thomas Pickering, told Chinese officials in Beijing that a thorough internal study had shown that the bombing was a simple mistake. His story rebuts others and, as this excerpt shows, claims plausibility; and it is of special interest to us because it embodies reasons which the US Government officials concerned must have believed would be ‘good and persuasive reasons’:

— We have heard that many people believe that our attack on your Embassy was intentional.

— Clearly the United States had absolutely no reason to want to attack your protected embassy facility ...

— Bombing the Chinese Embassy also would have been completely antithetical to President Clinton’s strong personal commitment to strengthening the relationship between the United States and China ...

— Moreover, bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade would have made absolutely no sense in terms of our policy objectives in Kosovo ...

— In particular, as Secretary Albright told Premier Zhu in April, we always expected that China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, would need to be a part of the resolution of the Kosovo crisis. We knew we would need China’s support in this matter. Bombing your Embassy was hardly the way to persuade you to help ...

— I also have heard that some people in China subscribe to the theory that the bombing was caused by one or several individuals working in our government who conspired to subvert U.S.-China relations or who may have concluded that China was too friendly to Belgrade or that the Embassy was playing some role in assisting Belgrade.

— We have found no evidence of an unauthorized conspiracy to attack the Chinese Embassy, for any reason whatsoever, or of any “rogue element” within

<sup>2</sup> Martin Kettle, *The Guardian*, newsUnlimited Special Report, 25 June 1999. <http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/Kosovo/> [seen 3 June 2000].

the U.S. Government. The errors we have identified as producing the accident took place in three separate and independent areas. There was a series of three separate sets of events, some of which affecting the databases occurred as far back as 1997, when no one could have predicted this present set of circumstances. It is just not conceivable, given the circumstances and errors committed, that the attack could have been brought about by a conspiracy or by “rogue elements.”

— Science has taught us that a direct explanation, backed up by full knowledge of facts obtained through a careful investigation, is always preferable to speculation and far fetched, convoluted or contrived theories with little or no factual backing.

— In this tragic case, the facts show a series of errors: that the target was mislocated; the databases designed to catch mistakes were inaccurate and incomplete; and none of the reviews uncovered either of the first two errors.<sup>3</sup>

I note that among those accompanying Mr. Pickering is a long-time colleague whom I trust and respect; I believe she would not knowingly engage in a deception.

A few months later the issue of an intentional strike is raised again by an article in the *Observer* [London];<sup>4</sup> but a respected critic of US military policies, fiercely independent, investigates and concludes there is nothing to it.<sup>5</sup> His report is “according to my sources”; he does not

<sup>3</sup> Oral presentation by Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering on June 17 [1999] to the Chinese Government Regarding the Accidental Bombing of the PRC Embassy in Belgrade. Released July 6, 1999. <http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn/english/press/release/presentation.html> [seen 3 June 2000].

<sup>4</sup> John Sweeney, Jens Holsoe, and Ed Vulliamy, *The Observer*, 17 October 1999. *Politiken* [Copenhagen] also published the article, to which its correspondent contributed. They cite unnamed “senior military and intelligence sources in Europe” that the embassy was struck because “it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications.” A flight controller is quoted saying “The Chinese embassy had an electronic profile, which Nato located and pinpointed.” The Chinese embassy was “removed from a prohibited targets list after Nato electronic intelligence (Elint) detected it sending army signals to Milosevic’s forces.” They also say that “inquiries have revealed there never was a VJ directorate of supply and procurement at the site named by [CIA Director George] Tenet. The VJ office for supplies—which Tenet calls FDSP—is some 500 metres down the street from the address he gave.” <http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Kosovo/Story/0,2763,92806,00.html> [seen 3 June 2000].

<sup>5</sup> William Arkin, 8 November 1999, special report to [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Arkin’s sources say “the Chinese Embassy was not being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications.” Arkin tells a new story, one which stresses NATO’s deciding on an especially heavy raid on several sites in Belgrade that night. The new embassy site could not have been removed from the ‘no-hit’ list because, he says, it was never on it.

claim to have spoken to the sources on whom the *Observer* correspondents relied. A *New York Times* inquiry fails to confirm intentional attack on the embassy.<sup>6</sup> At this point I have ‘good reason’ to remain alert; I may hope that the *Observer* correspondents, whose journalistic reputations are at stake, will seek sources they can bring into the public realm; but the pieces for a *believable* account of ‘intentional attack’ are not at hand, and flaws in the Pickering account, if it is flawed, have not been systematically developed. Pickering’s call on science—“Science has taught us that a direct explanation, backed up by full knowledge of facts obtained through a careful investigation, is always preferable to speculation”—neglects that insiders conducted the investigation, and only insiders have access to the ‘facts’ found, so that the basis for the ‘direct explanation’ is not available for scrutiny.

I like ‘direct explanations’, but sometimes we are surprised by a ‘good story’. Pickering would have us dismiss “speculation and far fetched, convoluted or contrived theories with little or no factual backing.” Fine. But suppose in the mid-1980s someone told us that a former US National Security Advisor had secretly piloted an aircraft full of arms to Teheran, carrying as gifts to the Ayatollah Khomeini a bible signed by President Ronald Reagan and a cake in the shape of a key. Far-fetched? Or the Iran-*Contra* affair?

On what I know, on the ‘good reasons’ I can develop, the only *believable* account I can credit is that the embassy was struck by mistake. It remains a nagging question why the FDSP was the *only* target proposed solely by the CIA, for which no explanation has been offered. And the *Observer* correspondents’ claims remain unresolved. It is possible to imagine other believable accounts. At this juncture none is made out.

Finally, I receive notice of a conference I will attend in China in October 2000. One of two topics on the agenda is the bombing of former Yugoslavia. No doubt the bombing of the Chinese Embassy will be discussed. So I must make a plan about what I will do if queried about the bombing. I might be queried publicly, and I will certainly be asked about it in conversation.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Lee Myers, *The New York Times*, 17 April 2000, reporting an effort to follow up the allegations which had appeared in the *Observer* and *Politiken*. Their interviews with 30 officials in Washington and in Europe “produced no evidence that the bombing of the embassy had been a deliberate act.” They also do not claim to have spoken to any of the *Observer* sources.

*Interpretations and Reasons, but Not Closure*

My response, on this occasion, is in two parts. First there is the story I choose to tell. “Well, what do you think about this Embassy bombing?” In response I might say something along these lines: the public evidence does not support a finding that bombing the Chinese embassy was intended, but it could have been. I might elaborate: I understand why the Chinese have taken the position they did, since the circumstantial evidence suggests either deliberate attack or an extraordinary coincidence. Then I am likely to be asked “Why do you say that?” My questioner wants to know my reasons, wants me to give some account of myself, to lay out why it is I have selected, from all of the responses I might have, the response which I initially offered. Then I would stress the fact that this was the only target the CIA chose alone. I would express skepticism about official accounts, even elaborate accounts, which explained the event as a simple error. I might note that the CIA has long experience in creating stories: after all, what is a ‘cover story’? I would insist that the official stories *could* be correct. I would emphasize that I strongly doubt, despite the strange circumstances, that the strike was intentional. I would not want to encourage anyone to believe it was intentional. I have no ‘good reason’ to reject the Pickering account. Still, I hesitate to adopt as my own an account based upon a report which I am not permitted to read.

In the first instance, I come to a (provisional) judgment about the stories I have heard. My response is selective. I retell portions, just a few elements, of what I have heard, and add a short gloss of my own. But what I tell is itself a story. It can stand by itself, though it may require a known context to be fully available. It includes the claims usual to all stories: there are actors and objects, categories, and causes. In fact, the story is about cause and intent; it addresses whether the Belgrade embassy was struck *with intent*.

In the second instance, I respond directly to ‘why?’ I do not merely repeat what I have said before, but make claims about my choice in the first instance. I offer reasons why I incorporated some elements of all the stories I had heard, and left others out. I calibrate more precisely my uncertainties, my sense what is possible but unlikely. As I am responding in good faith, I try to capture in words why I spoke as I did. But in a complex matter the ‘why’ explanation will never capture how my interpretive story—the story of the first instance—was created. In effect,

speech runs ahead of thought, even if I am extraordinarily careful in my choice of words, and my story must omit much of what I could report.

The heading of this section stresses that neither the story I tell, nor the story I tell of reasons, achieves closure. Each can be queried further.

My choice of one or another story-in-the-first-instance is, of course, not reducible to a simple list of reasons, or even to a nuanced account. But a good faith response to ‘why?’ can be useful to my conversational partners. It rounds out my initial response. It speaks directly to a problem they face, which is to decide what account each of them will compose in turn. It helps them choose elements of my story-in-the-first-instance for further discussion.

When I try to be explicit about reasons, I see that my reasons come from several different sources. Probably my unconsidered whole story-in-the-first-instance has at least this many sources. It may have others. In the same vein, the discussion which follows here will not be exhaustive, but is intended to suggest the kinds of reasons which could ‘make sense’ in a discussion of the type we are probing.

*Reasons: Is Attributed Intent Consistent with Known Motives?*

Is one or another story more consistent with my understanding of the *motives* of US Government officials?

I bring to the case experience in considering motives of US officials, including officials of the US Air Force, the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Which story—bombing by mistake? or bombing with intent?—is more consistent with my experience? Unfortunately, both are consistent. I know that officials make mistakes, especially in complex bureaucratic situations. I also know that agents act covertly and cover up.

*Reasons: Is the Story Believable?*

We have mentioned before Jerome Bruner’s test that a story be *believable*. This asks us to consider the story as a whole, rather than analyze it piece by piece. In the case at issue, believability may hinge on facts we do not have. For example, if any prior representations were made to the Chinese government to halt intelligence assistance to Serbia, then a Chinese official knowing that would find US denials incredible. That does not make them false, but it would make them incredible.

Even if there were no such history, the *coincidence* is so strange that US denials are at least suspect, to many incredible. It might be more believable if the Yugoslav arms export entity had occupied that building and that floor, but that is not what we are told. The US story, to be believable, requires that one accept that there were a number of errors, and in addition that the Chinese Embassy was struck by sheer coincidence.

The US story may be true, but it is scarcely *believable*. In this observation is a warning about Bruner's criterion.<sup>7</sup>

In surveying a story for believability, we typically anticipate one of a few kinds of particular faults: an unconvincing character, an unlikely event, an implausible sequence of actions and interactions, a violation of our understanding of regularities in nature, or some dissonance between the character as drawn and the role she or he is said to have enacted. Richard Nixon's denial that he erased the eighteen missing minutes remains in the popular imagination because it fails on every one of these grounds.

*Reasons: Is Independent Evidence Available?*

A good historian will look in the record for corroboration. Can the US account, or the Chinese suspicion, be corroborated?

As far as we know, the decision process which led to the targeting instruction took place among US and NATO officials. We have no access to independent confirmation of any point in the stories.<sup>8</sup>

*Reasons: Can the Witnesses Be Cross-Examined?*

A good lawyer prepares for court, or for a sworn deposition. Can the sources of the US story be examined?

Obviously not. They are military personnel or CIA officers, or personnel of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, who are subject to security requirements and not free to speak. Absent a 'leak', or an officer choosing to be a whistleblower, there is no access to persons, documents, or files which could be tested in court or in academic inquiry.

<sup>7</sup> Bruner had noted that a story's being *believable* did not ensure it was *true*.

<sup>8</sup> There were published speculations that *some* targets in Serbia were reviewed by US officers, but not referred to NATO.

*Reasons: Does Anything in Subsequent Acts Imply a Stronger Case for One or the Other Story?*

A story may be able to be assessed using information which becomes available after the fact.

All that is known to the public in this case is that the United States agreed to pay an indemnity. But there had never been question that the United States dropped the bomb which caused the deaths, so its payment of an indemnity tells us nothing about whether the US or Chinese story is stronger.

On the other hand, we might infer from Chinese acceptance of the indemnity that China was no longer as sure as before that the embassy had been targeted deliberately. This is a speculative observation, but might prove to be a reason on which one would rely.

*Reasons: Does It Serve Their Interests?*

A different approach to motive asks about *interest*. We say that states act in their interest, if they can discern it.

So this criterion raises problems for the Chinese story. It is hard to see how the United States could expect anything but long-term grief by bombing the Chinese Embassy, whatever the reason. Of course, the officials making the decision might not share that sense of interest. If China were advising the Serbs, and threatening pilots as a result, or were providing military rebroadcast facilities, that would weigh heavily in US judgments. Still, even if that were so, there had to be other ways to express dismay.

So judgment of the force of this reason turns on which we choose: bombing was in the US interest, and they so understood it, or it was not in the US interest, but they believed it was anyway.

*Reasons: Do They Have Motives Outside the Case?*

I might dismiss a claim if I thought it was uttered, or may have been uttered, for persuasive effect alone, rather than as part of a 'good faith' effort to reach an agreed view of a matter.

In early 1999 those Chinese intimately concerned with US-China relations were aware of a campaign by isolationist Republicans to depict China as hostile. The Cox Report was completed in January 1999,

though it took some months before portions were made public. Perhaps Chinese specialists argued that China could show the United States to be wrong in the world's eyes. Or perhaps Chinese specialists who had staked their reputations on improved relations believed they had to guard their political flank at home by demonstrating patriotic, anti-American spirit.

*Approaches Specific to the Arguments of this Text*

The reasons that we have canvassed in these last few pages recurrently turn to stories. In that sense they are consistent with the main arguments of this text. But they are also, in some respects, commonplace. They invoke character, intent, corroboration, plausibility, just as we would expect to see them in any court of law. Do the positions developed in this text suggest a *distinctive* approach to the question of 'good reasons'?

*Putting Particulars First.* Placing weight on personal intent, face-to-face conversation, and the internal sources of plans for war implies an orientation toward *particulars*. This approach would not commend, for example, using broad theoretical propositions as reasons to accept or reject claims in a particular case. So to argue "of course the United States did it, because Powers deploy power to make their point" does not make sense to us. Instead, we insist on learning the *particular* story in order to assess whether, *in this case*, the United States used its air power to make a political point. For this account, 'good reasons' must be rooted in the particular. A 'good reason' will not be ignorant of particulars in any way that disqualifies it.

The reporters of the *Observer*, *Politiken*, [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), and *The New York Times* all sought particulars. Unfortunately, the terms on which they interviewed appear to have precluded naming the sources. As a result key facts needed to assess the reports, or pursue them, are not at hand. We have already pointed out that we have no access to the US 'investigation' nor any resources to question or confirm it.

*Comparing the Particulars of Two Cases.* Does insisting on the specifics of a single case mean that other cases cannot be sources of 'good reasons'? On the contrary, we learn by looking at another case that, in its circumstances, some line of action was *possible*, and we see something of the difficulties faced. This is the classic comparative method. It



requires a complementary argument—that features of the two cases render the comparison appropriate—which is implied but rarely explicit. Perhaps the cases are *adequately similar* in what matters.<sup>9</sup>

*Are the 'Good Reasons' Themselves Specific to the Case at Hand?* Reliance on specifics can go one step further. Carried to its most radical implications, it would imply that what are 'good reasons' for a given account in a given episode will be governed by the episode and be particular to the account.

Some of the reasons cited in our discussion of the Chinese Embassy bombing turn on the internal coherence of Chinese and US claims, and their consistence with general experience. 'Believability' is one such. Does either story 'make sense'?

*Illustration from the Falklands/Malvinas War.* Consider a second case, which also hinges on whether there was intent. The author of an account of the Falklands/Malvinas War, writing both for historians and for the public, introduces an Argentine commercial initiative on South Georgia island, in the month preceding Argentina's assault on the Falklands. He reports one participant's claim that the metal salvage operation on South Georgia in March 1982 was innocent. The author then says he "cannot be certain the crisis was not deliberately engineered but I do not think it was." He explicitly offers a good reason: "I have been interviewing people like him for nearly twenty years and I believe his description of events was a sincere one." That is an appeal to experience and authority, qualities of the writer, external to the case, but also rests on the vantage of the source, inside the episode. The author adds a particular reason, based on details of the case itself: "provoking of a crisis so early in the year conflicted with the timetable of the Argentine 'national plan' being developed."<sup>10</sup>

*Relying on Particulars, Claims are Open and Provisional.* In stressing primacy of the particular, this text rejects the mainstream of international political studies, because it insists that the aim of disciplined and

<sup>9</sup> The method of 'focused comparison' is explained and exemplified in Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 11–12.

systematic study is not ‘truth’ or ‘lawful regularity’ or even ‘theory’ (understood as a complex of causal claims displaying what is *probable* in a given constellation of circumstances) but instead stories which one would credit *faute de mieux*. Such stories need not be narrow in subject; they can range, as historical accounts do; their authors may discern pattern and recurrence; exploiting particulars of cases does not confine one’s own account to a subject as narrow as the particulars one cites. But there is a difference of kind. Perhaps the difference is that pursuit of theory longs for deduction, while in a deductible world there would be no surprises, and no point to stories. Perhaps the difference is that pursuit of theory must take its categories seriously, while pursuit of stories takes categories skeptically. Perhaps relying on categories and concepts *taken skeptically* requires that interpretation of a complex case or claim must be, and will remain, provisional and inconclusive. After all, there is more to be learned about the case.

The balance-scale tips firmly, not to categories and generalization, but to episodes and the finer but still complex episodes within them. Intellectual candor requires acknowledging that only sensitive reconstitution of negotiations, an interpretation of their content which respects texture and detail, can do justice to the politics in which the significance of the episode resides. The point is to *query* the case and return a reading of it to the Readings which are in circulation. The value of the resulting contribution lies in its significance for ongoing conversations in the community, not from the literal reproduction of facts properly dismissed as ‘empiricism’, and it is part of a professional interpreter’s skill to choose questions which matter and social experience which is good grist for insight. There are, of course, strong incentives to claim more, both in the classroom and in print; but stamping open, provisional interpretations with seals of scholarly and institutional authority overstates what can be done. Categorical claims and ‘findings’ are most useful when their limits and circumscriptions are well-understood.

*Centrality of Decision.* Our text asserts that the moment of authoritative decision is paramount. Whatever the motives participants might bring into the room, whatever part different arguments might have played in their judgment, it is the resultant text which matters.

Therefore I would look to such decisions, and the occasions in which they were taken, for candidate ‘good reasons’. Those British writers who

say that Margaret Thatcher had unusually strong influence on George Bush's decision to oppose the seizure of Kuwait have a 'good reason' in her presence with him in Aspen, Colorado, when he first assessed the invasion, and then two days later in the Oval Office itself where she was present during the highest-level US discussions of its response. Still, the evidence is circumstantial. Knowing just what was said—we do not—could confirm or refute this line of argument. We do believe that it was during these hours that Bush decided the Iraqi seizure "would not stand."

*A Larger Case: Are Nuclear Weapons Good For You?*

In this section we will further canvass the problem of 'good reasons', but on an issue of larger scale. The Chinese Embassy bombing and the South Georgia scrap metal expedition are small-scale events, and claims about motive and conduct are rather discrete. By contrast, claims about the role of nuclear weapons since 1945, and their probable effects in the future, concern policy at its most consequential, what Liddell Hart called 'grand strategy'. Does this shift in scale affect what are 'good reasons', or how we can think about them?

We begin by sketching briefly, and illustratively, two clusters of opinions about the role of nuclear weapons since WWII. One says that they made for peace and that keeping them will continue to bring peace and stability. The other says that nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous and that keeping them, far from assuring peace and stability, runs a profoundly unacceptable risk. Of course authors vary in how they orient themselves around these positions; and the nuances of their views should not be lost; so in quoting typical expressions of these views, we also acknowledge differences, but not as fully as debate deserves.

The idea that nuclear deterrence prevents war among the Powers has wide currency.<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Waltz and, with greater discretion, Pascal Boniface have argued that nuclear weapons create stabilities. John Lewis Gaddis includes the argument in his discussion of the 'Long Peace'.<sup>12</sup> John Mearsheimer attributes peace in Europe to military equality between the US and USSR, bipolarity, and to "the fact that each superpower was armed with a large nuclear arsenal." Nuclear weapons

<sup>11</sup> The speculation that it *should* have this effect was aired in 1945, within weeks after Hiroshima. See discussion of the views of Bernard Brodie, Chapter 9.

<sup>12</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, Spring 1986, v 10 n 4, pp. 99–142.

“vastly expanded the violence of war, making deterrence far more robust.” “Nuclear weapons are a superb deterrent: they guarantee high costs, and are more useful for self-defense than for aggression.” He concludes that “a nuclear-free Europe would be the most dangerous among possible post-Cold War orders. The pacifying effects of nuclear weapons—the security they provide, the caution they generate, the rough equality they impose, and the clarity of relative power they create—would be lost.”<sup>13</sup> Stephen van Evera, arguing that “war is far more likely when conquest is easy,” writes that nuclear weapons render great powers “essentially unconquerable,” because their defense gains “a large military advantage.”<sup>14</sup> Mearsheimer calls for “well-managed proliferation” of nuclear weapons, in Europe preferably to Germany alone.<sup>15</sup> Call this view, which adopts the ‘long peace’ argument and extends it to ‘well-managed proliferation’, the ‘nuclear peace’ position.

A very different position is taken by advocates of weapon denuclearization. A clear text espousing this view is the report of the Canberra Commission. Nuclear weapons “diminish the security of all states.” Can peace be attributed to nuclear weapons? “Possession of nuclear weapons has not prevented wars, in various regions, which directly or indirectly involve the major powers. They were deemed unsuitable for use even when those powers suffered humiliating military setbacks.” The world “rejected” proliferation by adopting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 1968, but “proliferation of nuclear weapons is amongst the most immediate security challenges facing the international community.” The Commission is “convinced of the basic importance of agreed targets and guidelines which would drive the process inexorably toward the ultimate objective of final elimination, at the earliest possible time.”<sup>16</sup> So the Commission advocates as a compelling purpose achieving nuclear

<sup>13</sup> John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future,” in *International Security*, Summer 1990, v 15 n 1, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al [eds], *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 3–54, pp. 5, 9, 18, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War,” in *International Security*, v 22 n 4, Spring 1998, pp. 5–43, reprinted in Michael E. Brown et al [eds], *Theories of Peace and War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 55–93, p. 55, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer, above, pp. 35–38. Elsewhere Mearsheimer has identified Ukraine as a state which could gain security through nuclear weapons.

<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Canberra Commission*. 14 August 1996. Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/dfat/cc/cchome.html> [seen 14 June 2000].

weapon abolition and prohibition. We call this ‘zero nuclear weapons’ (ZNW).

What does the existence of these two viewpoints suggest about ‘good reasons’? Why would I adopt one, rather than another, of these positions as my own?

*Reasons: Differing and Incompatible Assumptions*

‘Nuclear peace’ advocates, confident that nuclear weapons will not be used because their use will be deterred, do not adopt an exigent view. By contrast, ZNW advocates consider society at grave risk.

‘Nuclear peace’ advocates trust those charged with responsibility for nuclear weapons to retain control and act soundly. ZNW advocates are not confident that this will take place.

Is it a ‘good reason’ to assert that the assumptions of a stated position are flawed, or implausible?

Consider how this basic difference plays out, for example, in judging risk.

*Reasons: Differing Views of Risk*

‘Nuclear peace’ adherents believe that war is a persistent threat to sovereign states, held at bay by force and balancing. The risk they posit is that there might ‘break out’ a widespread, major conventional war: a replay of WWII. By contrast, ZNW adherents see the most dangerous risk in nuclear weapons themselves. The nuclear powers did not turn to nuclear weapons when challenged in Korea, Vietnam, or Afghanistan, so nuclear weapons are no guarantee against large-scale conventional war. But the very existence of nuclear weapons makes their use possible. ‘Nuclear peace’ advocates do not take into account that their expectation of ‘long-term managed non-use’ could break down. ZNW advocates, on the other hand, do not dwell on the problem of war by conventional means.

Arguments about risk should be inescapable in any discussion of war. Doubting an interpretation because it overlooks a significant risk is certainly sound: a ‘good reason’. At the same time, the claim that ‘there is significant risk’ is itself subject to a challenge for reasons. I prefer ZNW to nuclear peace because there is a risk long-term managed non-use could break down: but why do I think so?

- I could appeal to specifics: although nuclear weapons have not been used or lost since 1945, there have been many incidents in which security practices have been breached and technical failures occurred. ‘Long-term managed non-use’ requires that custodians neither use nuclear weapons nor lose control of them, warhead by warhead, over a long time, a very large number of opportunities for failure.
- I could appeal to a general principle, of which I am convinced: all complex systems, given time, will fail, and given sufficient time, will fail catastrophically.

If this is a reasonable expectation about Main Street retailers, civilizations, One Hoss Shays, and all human bodies, it is also a reasonable expectation about ‘long-term managed non-use’. The objection might be made, however, that an expectation of extended non-use is not ‘managed non-use forever’, and that the point is only to temporize until some better way to keep the peace is available fifty or a hundred or two hundred years from now.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, our objections to generalizations apply. It may be *rhetorically* effective to reason from the fate of other social institutions, but particular features of the nuclear problem and the people who manage it could compel them to act with special care, defying general expectations. Clearly something like that is assumed by ‘nuclear peace’ advocates.

- I could adopt language from psychology and identify myself as ‘risk averse’, rather than ‘risk accepting’. That would explain my preference, but it would not be a ‘good reason’ because it is by definition ‘my reason’, and has no weight for anyone else.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The logic of ‘long-term managed non-use’ is that the capacity to deploy nuclear weapons is kept in place. There is no assurance that a ‘better way’ will be found, or even sought. Finally, even if one agreed with the objection, and accepted that one can have ‘managed non-use’ for a time without any *certainty* of catastrophic failure, if the duration of a catastrophic episode is shorter than the period of time to be bridged then catastrophic failure is *possible*.

<sup>18</sup> But such considerations often have weight for me, and I imagine they have weight for others, which can even be *decisive*. That politics in society requires sharable reasons does not mean that our choices and identifications are bound by them. This

Since risk is endemic in life, the argument between ‘nuclear peace’ and ZNW advocates could also be framed as an argument about singular risk, or the comparative risk of one policy rather than the other, or the risk of the proposed policy by comparison to other underlying risks which accompany social existence. Probably ‘good reasons’, but not ‘compelling reasons’, could be devised around each of these conceptions of risk. Then questions like these might be asked: does the ‘good reason’, as set out, respect the special qualities of nuclear weapons? does it take into account the integrity of attention and responsibility which stewards of nuclear weapons must sustain? how does it acknowledge the possibility of unknowns, such as unexpected events and synergies?

*Reasons: Differing Evaluation of the Consequences  
of Being Shown Wrong by Events*

A standard ‘realist’ argument is that experience tells the truth. The world enforces its rules by imposing defeats, failures, and disappearances. Reality asserts itself. Whether a policy is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ will be found out in the real world.

Then one ‘good reason’ to prefer a policy is that it can be tested incrementally. A plan which incorporates the possibility of its own revision is open to adjustment, responding to ‘messages from reality’. Appropriately revised to substitute an interpreted world for one which ‘speaks for itself’, this approach can be adapted to choices among plans, which may be recurrently adjusted.

Comparing ‘nuclear peace’ and ZNW, it is clear that the consequences of being wrong are radically different. If ‘long-term managed non-use’ cannot be sustained, the result is nuclear war; and if its advocates are wrong about the existential nuclear threat deterring conventional war, then the result is conventional war. On the other hand, if the ZNW advocates are wrong, the result is limited at the most to large-scale conventional war, and *nuclear war is logically and technically excluded*.

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text assumes throughout the pervasive roles of perception, selection, and interpretation, which are not reducible to ‘reasons’. Something like ‘sheer preference’, integrating across reasons and unreasoned dispositions, orchestrates many choices.

Note, however, that the *fact* that I hold a preference, if I declare it, may have weight for someone else.

In this example appeals to hypothetical results of a future-oriented claim's *being wrong* have a compelling force and certainly form a 'good reason' to favor one view rather than the other.

Other issues arise from 'being wrong'. First, consider incremental adjustment under the two proposed regimes. 'Nuclear peace' cannot be incrementally adjusted, because its very point is to keep enough nuclear force at hand to restrain other Powers. By contrast, if ZNW is pursued, but conventional war begins to appear to be a greater problem than had been hoped, there remains the option of joint, more robust *conventional* collective security measures. The response could be scaled at will, along open choices of weaponry, numbers, and deployments, before reconstitution of nuclear forces had to be considered.

Second, 'nuclear peace' could be shown wrong if a nuclear state or non-state entity chose to defy the logic of deterrence, and instead practice a logic of blackmail. Since nuclear deterrence *requires an available and vulnerable target*, an entity without associated cities and population would be invulnerable to deterrence. Fissile material suitable for bombs, as well as bomb-making, would be features of the 'nuclear peace' world, so diversion to a non-state entity would be possible. In this hypothetical case, if the Powers failed to ensure their monopoly by intelligence methods and intervention, 'nuclear peace' would be shown wrong, but there would be no evident recourse. A somewhat different set of possibilities apply to the ZNW alternative. Societies would remain vulnerable to blackmail by a non-state entity, or a state entity, which broke the nuclear prohibition. The difference is that in the ZNW world there are no official bomb-makers, and fissile material well-suited for bombs would be flatly prohibited, so the line between prohibited and permitted activity would be clear and distinct.

*Reasons: Differing Faith in Capacity to Predict the Future*

Planning requires that planners speculate on the future, even if they base their plans on accounts of workable projects from the past. It may be a 'good reason', however, to argue that a given project requires undue faith in the planners' ability to predict or shape the future. Like every other 'good reason', that too may be challenged. But there is clearly a difference between a plan which requires that many elements of the plan work perfectly, and a plan which is *forgiving* in important respects. And it may be a 'good reason' to call attention to this.



*Looking for Good Stories*

Among stories are some which *recount the stories which mattered to the people involved*. Stories which do this convincingly are not the same as stories which attribute motives to the people involved, or dwell on their situation, or their history, though such stories may be offered as part of the interpretation of an episode. The fact that a story *reports stories which mattered to the people involved* is in itself a reason to take the story seriously, a ‘good reason’ to pay attention to it. But such a story carries a layer of interpretation, at a minimum in its selection of stories to recount, and the evidence it offers why these stories can truly be said to have ‘mattered to the people involved’. The fact that it contains embedded stories is not in itself a ‘good reason’ to be persuaded by the layer of interpretive claims.

The same logic applies to a story of plans. It is a ‘good reason’ to take it seriously that it incorporates stories which mattered to the planners.

These privileged stories are even more compelling if they show *how they reconciled and accommodated the inconsistencies and differences among accounts and plans which mattered for them*. That is, we want to see how they did what we now try to do, when we search for ‘good reasons’. [We have underscored ‘how’: at the outset of this work we distinguished ‘how’ wars are undertaken from ‘why’ a war is undertaken.] They were unavoidably confronted by ambiguity, as we are. We want to see how they understood the ambiguity of their situation and how they navigated through it. Interrogating the episode in this way reproduces the general problem of making good choices under uncertainty.

Another privileged story, as we observed in an earlier section, is a story about how a decision was made. Not only is a decision important in itself, but participants in future decision-making will recall what took place on earlier occasions. So details—place, time, participants—are significant. We want to understand better why, in a specific case, one decision was taken rather than another. We look for evidence in stories told by those who took the decision and in the documents they authorized. If our approach is distinctive in some respects, it is that we ask pointed questions about *the accounts which mattered to them and the plans which occupied their imaginations*. We are not interested—unlike many others—in the ‘social forces’ which led to their decision, or the

‘ideology’ it expressed, nor its representing ‘realpolitik’, nor its being explicable as one of a set of similar cases all of which follow an identical or very similar form. Where we would be tempted to cite ‘interest’, we want to find the accounts and plans through which that ‘interest’ is expressed.

The ‘good reason’ to adopt a given account as one’s own, on this logic, is that it *has the same shape—at one remove—as the ‘good reasons’ of actors in the privileged story for doing one thing rather than another*. It asks what those reasons were, and in what accounts and plans those ‘good reasons’ were embedded. Of course, this procedure does not prevent us from saying that we would have acted differently in their place.

There is another reason to do it this way. When leaders debate war, they do so with the adversary in mind. They regard the other party as an intentional, calculating, enemy. As we explore a decision, we should be especially alert to any story about adversaries. Extending our argument one step, we would be even more interested in finding accounts about a second party which told *a story of the accounts significant to the others and the plans which circulated among them*.

### *Stories and Good Reasons in the Hall of Mirrors*

The image is of an infinite hall of mirrors, or an infinitely deep stack of nested baskets. At the beginning there is one: a story. But inside the story, as part of the story, another is recounted. We have a ‘story of stories’. In turn, however, the story which is recounted can itself contain a story: ‘a story of stories of stories’.

Most stories have no further *explicit* story inside. A story need not include any embedded account. If it refers to people or objects, the reader may make up stories about them: there are *implied* stories. If a character is introduced, we assume the character has had a life’s experience, and might have told about them. But no explicit story is reported. The mirrors stop there.

As we have pointed out US Gulf War policy is comprehensible only when we [correctly] attribute stories about the Vietnam War to key figures. Colin Powell explicitly invoked Vietnam, and his interpretation of Vietnam is reasonably cited to explain what preparations the Pentagon believed were required before beginning Gulf War II. The Bush Administration’s military posture as a whole was guided by stories of

Vietnam. Twenty-five years after America fled Saigon, Vietnam continues to mark Pentagon policy.<sup>19</sup>

Rarely do story-tellers get beyond “a story of stories of stories.” Introducing a further generation is possible. You could do so, for example, by (1) your telling of (2) my telling of (3) Gulf War figures’ telling of (4) stories current in Vietnam. Now consider how successive retellings are placed one on top of another. The *original* story may have passed through many hands, before reaching me, but I really know only about my source. Adding generations degrades the nested, earlier versions, which fall away, and intermediate levels are candidates to be dropped altogether. Rarely does an historian or intelligence specialist attempt to reconstruct the chain of stories.

*Reasons: Nature*

It is a ‘good reason’ to reject a story that its view of nature violates our understanding. Even if scientific claims are ‘just stories’, they describe a rulefulness which our everyday experience confirms. Some of the more fanciful Star Wars proposals advanced during the Reagan Administration were abandoned largely because of doubt that promised scenarios would work in the known universe.

The matter is more complicated when both nature and society are in play. The concept of ‘socio-technical systems’ is useful. Many of our social systems incorporate machines and depend upon natural processes. Even pre-modern field agriculture is a socio-technical system. Everyday living and working is inextricably bound up in such combinations.

Confusion about rulefulness in social affairs stems in part from failing to distinguish social from technical. Material characteristics and constraints are the prime source of regularity in socio-technical systems.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Becker, Pentagon correspondent of *The New York Times*, says of the Pentagon that it is

still run at the senior level by the young lieutenants from the [Vietnam] war. And just recently, covering the Kosovo War from the vantage point of the Pentagon, which is as close as they would let us get, very much there was the sense that General Clark, who started out in Vietnam as well, remembered the war, remembered how he wanted the war—the air war and the whole process—to be done. It’s still alive and it informs how they wage war, what they avoid, how they describe their fighting and how they want it brought across to the American public.

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/vietnam-panel-transcript.htm> [seen 8 June 2000]

A second source of rulefulness is custom, our term for cultural experience expressed in widely-held expectations about what we and others will do in certain circumstances. But when pattern is observed in experience or custom or institutions, what part is due to nature and what part to social choice? It may be a 'good reason' to be persuaded by an interpretation that it respects the distinction between regularities due to nature and regularities—uncertain, more plastic—constituted through social practice.

*Reasons: Nature as 'Resource' and as 'Constraint'*

Discussions of war bring nature in as 'resource' and 'constraint'. A natural constraint is some feature of the world which imposes a limit on practice, and so on good plans. It may be an implacable constraint, which cannot be overcome by any means, or it may pose a problem for which there is some socio-technical solution, which evades or 'overcomes' the constraint. The simplest illustrations, central to war, are nature's constraints on unassisted movement and hauling. Transportation systems—horse, railway, ships, aircraft, missiles—adapt material means to overcome this constraint.

To fight a modern war requires feeding personnel and sustaining socio-technical systems. Plans to do so include lists of material requirements. These are the resources needed. It is a 'good reason' to doubt a plan that it does not respect material requirements.

But it is also a 'good reason' to doubt attributed plans that they fail to incorporate 'enemy' resource constraints. It was one thing to imagine during the Cold War that the Soviet Union or China might initiate a large-scale war of aggression: but were Soviet and Chinese capabilities exaggerated?

Resources can be a hedge against changes in natural conditions. In well-known episodes—Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and the US Marines' retreat as winter fell in Korea—bad weather caught the forces materially unprepared for the hardships they would face. Military planners appreciate logistic dependence; and modern militaries invest heavily in weather prediction. It is a 'good reason' to question a plan that it fails to acknowledge resource dependencies and possible changes in natural conditions; and it is a 'good reason' to credit an account of the past that its authors are alert to the interplay between material requirements and participants' intent.

*Reasons: 'It's the Right Thing to Do'*

'Good reasons' which persuasively invoke right and justice are always good reasons. So examining past episodes, or assessing a plan, it is always appropriate to ask whether actions taken, or contemplated, are among 'right actions' in the given case. This is not asking 'will it work?' but rather how it measures up after a weighing of rights and wrongs. And of course that is not an easy matter, for the familiar reasons that (i) moral judgments are also interpretive claims, subject to contest, and (ii) although action typically has many consequences, there are no external standards to compare multiple goods and harms.

However, the practice of negotiation, offering reasons, and ultimately resolving the irresolvable in personal choices and, in groups, at the moment of authoritative decision, also offers a path through the thicket of claims for morality, ethics, and justice. In the practical world, these considerations, like all others, are submerged in decision. We can be challenged, as always, to give an account of ourselves.

If the difficulties posed by ethics and justice are so easily sidestepped, how can claims drawn from them constitute 'good reasons'? While there is no universally-agreed codex in which we can find the norms for right action, there are some outrages so great that almost everyone will agree they are great wrongs. So some actions observed in wars of the last decade certainly qualify as great wrongs: rape, severing children's arms, expulsions. The requirement that governments exhaust methods of dispute settlement before undertaking war follows from the fact that soldiers kill, and the conviction that killing is wrong. It is immoral and unjust to choose war lightly.

Of course, if politics were a simple matter of choosing right rather than wrong it would be dull stuff. Because we can imagine many paths to good, some politics is negotiating choices among competing goods. And because in some circumstances there is no practical path which avoids damaging some things we value, politics is also about selecting among comparative harms. And if we look closely at the choices available, and the circumstances in which they will have effects, goods and harms are commonly mixed, and reasons to accept less than the greatest good abundant. Under these circumstances, all that interpreters of plans can offer are claims about goods and harms in the possible outcomes, taken as wholes. Some of the harms accepted may be so great that they qualify, in our ordinary understanding, as evils. The weighing must be subjective,

and not mathematical, but it can be done, and reasons offered in turn for doing it one way rather than another.

It is also a 'good reason' that claims for right cultivate the 'culture of argument' to which James Boyd White has referred. The very fact that questions of right and wrong are introduced into the debate, made subjects of Readings, enriches political exchange. Arguments from convenience, expedience, or 'order', are shown to be insufficient, or incomplete. This is never more important than when the issues of right, wrong, and justice concern maintaining the very possibility of political discourse and accountable politics, which governments are so prone to restrict in time of war and the prelude to war: so it is always a 'good reason' that one's claim is persuasively associated with the maintenance and enhancement of basic freedoms, of speech and person.

*Are 'Good Reasons' Those My Peers Will Accept?*

One way to escape regress answering 'why?' a reason should be accepted is to refer the question to authority. This assumes there is an authority ready to pronounce. The law includes 'rules of evidence' to guide a court deciding what may and what may not be admitted in trying a case. The very notion of 'intersubjective judgment' assumes that weight can be given to a conclusion which has been thoroughly assessed by a competent group. So it might be attractive to say that a 'good reason' is one which persuades the audience. In war choice, a 'good reason' will be one which persuades authoritative decision-makers.

The problem is that 'bad reasons' or 'not so good reasons' can also persuade an audience. Moreover, this procedure accepts that the conversation is concluded, even though better reasons may remain to be devised. And, its most significant effect, it requires that the individual abandon to others his or her responsibility to exercise reason on reasons.

We have said conversation and negotiation are central to politics. How is approaching peers, winning their agreement or acceptance, any different? In conversation, challenges and requests for clarification run both ways, as participants exchange and refine interpretations and reasons. The 'approval model' has some significance, certainly in democratic theory; but approval alone is a truncated, confined response, akin to casting a ballot. Similarly, we value intersubjectivity because it is not merely a collection of independent subjectivities, but requires joint and collective work.

*The Paradox of 'Good Reasons' in a Realist World*

The problem of 'audience' raises a special question when one has one's own reasons for a judgment but believes that they will not persuade other people. They will not persuade in civil society, and they will not persuade around the table of authoritative decision. What is one to do?

Assume, for a moment, that 'realist' and 'neo-realist' orthodoxy, often in a dilute or distorted form, is widely believed. On this assumption, most officials accept its basic precepts uncritically and it has thoroughly invaded political discourse among the public. Under that circumstance, can any reason that is not a *realist* reason be a 'good reason'? After all, politics is social practice.

No doubt people judge 'good reasons' by what they have previously believed. But it would violate the requirement of good faith discourse to pretend realist reasons while holding other reasons *in pectore*. Moreover, to 'talk realist' would instantiate realism, bending to power and giving greater currency to 'realist' analysis, despite one's doubts. In the short term one might more easily persuade, but in the long term the war question would remain hard to discuss.

This argues for confronting 'realism', using the problem at hand as an example. 'Realists' and others share the same natural and social worlds, and both begin with the realization that it is easy to destroy. 'Realism' may be constructed to avoid disconfirmation, but it fails to predict important features of international politics, and caricatures both states and societies. On this view, 'realist' reasons are not 'good reasons'.

*Is It Enough To Make an Interpretation Provisionally?*

If 'persuasiveness' is not a good criterion, how can anyone facing a war choice escape from an infinite regress of reasons for reasons? There seem to be two ways. One argues that it is enough to halt at a *provisional interpretation* for which one has *adequate* reasons, given a learned and negotiated sense what constitutes adequacy for 'questions like this'. Whether one then reopens the question at a later time is the problem of 'reconsideration', to which Michael Bratman has given care in his discussions of intention.<sup>20</sup> The second way out is to subordinate closure

<sup>20</sup> Michael E. Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Stanford, California: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1999), esp. pp. 60–75. Bratman's views also influence the next paragraph.

of one's personal view to the need to 'move on' to another question, or to the pragmatic requirement to vote in making an authoritative decision. One says to oneself, "I haven't pursued this as far as I'd like, but we've got to vote on this text now." We will say more about reasons in the setting for authoritative decision in the next section.

We reach and manage agendas in much the same way. Individuals, and through them institutions, choose *some* problems and consider *some* reasons. Once part of shared conversation, assumptions and claims become privileged in a community of discourse, and are sources of action for a community of political practice. We even constitute 'disciplinary' discussion of politics and war in this way. It is not that there is ever a conclusive end to the negotiation of ways to think and talk about war, but that everyone is compelled by 'shortness of time' to adopt a concise and manageable agenda, bringing focal understandings and actions to the fore. This is true for one person; for an institution; for the state and each of its agencies; and even for those who acknowledge a common identity or understanding. Of course, among friends, or in government, agenda-setting proceeds as a matter of proposals and negotiations. At those times, it is always a 'good reason' to assert a practical need to focus, which in turn opens the door to negotiation of times, sequences, and omissions.

#### *'Adequacy' and Closure*

The story of 'war stories', then, is a story of doubled interpretations: accounts themselves, and corresponding accounts of reasons answering the question "why do you offer the interpretation you do?" This is an advance over 'mere assertion' because it adds a further text, one required for comparison of the merits of any two distinct accounts. It makes meaningful conversation and negotiation possible, which 'sheer assertion' does not.

Some epistemic communities center on practices which pose the question 'why?' and elicit, record, and test responses. For example, a paper in *Nature* or *Science* typically consists of a brief claim and an extended 'why'. The author anticipates further questions if her account is unpersuasive on any point. On medical rounds, physicians offer accounts of observed symptoms, in quest of high certainty but aware of the possibility of error. A court of law enacts an adversarial procedure: prosecutorial claims are systematically challenged. In a university



seminar, not only are accounts of reasons for judgments expected, but the subject of ‘good reasons’ is commonly part of the syllabus.

These cases differ, however, in the role of decision, and its effects on closure. Editors of *Science* make a publishing decision, after peer review; the decision is discrete, and publication is an irreversible event; but the article’s claims can be disputed. In the courtroom, the judge decides; the decision is discrete; though it is subject to appeal, the object is closure. In the university, properly understood, there is no decision, and therefore no closure. Which of these examples does war choice most closely resemble?

In debating war, a community follows two concurrent and simultaneous tracks. One is lodged in civil society: the conversation is like that in a seminar class, ongoing and without closure. The second is in government: an authoritative body makes a discrete choice, the ‘authoritative decision’, momentarily definitive, offering *temporary closure*, sufficient to plan and to act. As in law, the object is closure. But unlike in law, in politics there is every expectation that the issue will return. Closure is temporary. The ongoing discussion in civil society, and inside government (whose personnel are inescapably tied to civil society as well), will reopen issues and pose new ones. But temporary closure is—for the time being—good enough. It is all that can be had.

Voting in a political assembly does not bring a definitive resolution to issues—not on claims and arguments, nor on reasons advanced in their support—but it does *finesse closure*. It solves a practical problem. Getting a result, without resolving irresolubles, is part of the political magic of decisions.

The issue of ‘adequate reasons’ is submerged in each individual’s vote, but the reasons themselves must play a role. They are indispensable in deciding ‘aye’ or ‘nay’, and in choosing, for example, whether to intervene, what to say, what alternatives if any to offer, when to give up one’s dissent. Joint deliberation requires reasons, compels their utterance, shoving individuals’ idiosyncratic preferences to one side and requiring that objectors address explicit claims. Preference, illusion, unvoiced motives and whim are also present, and my own sense is that they have much to do both in shaping choices and in the final selection. But no closure is required on ‘adequacy’, or whether a given action is ‘wise’ or ‘sound’, or even what weight is given by individual participants to ‘non-rational’ sources of preference. The only judgment that they must make is whether to record themselves ‘aye’ or ‘nay’.

So we have the paradoxical result, or seemingly paradoxical result, that accounts of reasons are profoundly consequential, but need not be brought to closure, and in any complex case are unlikely to be brought to closure even for an individual in the privacy of his or her own thoughts. But I believe this is where the matter should rest.

### *Conclusions*

This entire work is premised on the conviction that war choice and war avoidance are matters for politics, properly understood as a realm of conversation and reasoned exchange. This is not to say politics can be reduced to formal reason. Policy depends upon our repertoire of stories and the imaginative use we make of them. Stories understood in this way incorporate the ‘irrational’ and the non-rational. They carry relational and aesthetic preferences, and when they concern war they often explicitly arise from fear. Given this approach, ‘good reasons’ serve several purposes.

First, since we assume a world told through many stories, and require no special permission for authorship, we need resources by which to choose the stories we will adopt as our own. ‘Good reasons’ give us some such resources.

Second, since we insist on understanding politics as the quest for complementary projects, for which a conversation between two people is the paradigmatic occasion, we need a way to orient such conversations and render them productive. We understand that a conversation begins with a claim. So I put my claim on the table: “nuclear weapons are too risky.” But where does it go from there? Of course you may disagree. But we need more to keep the conversation going. Having both claims and reasons provides an asymmetry inviting, even requiring, movement. For by challenging your reasons I call forth a response, whereas rejecting your claim elicits only a shrug.

Third, the productivity of such a conversation lies in part in *reasons which can be shared with others*. In the process of talking, we will find some sub-claims and reasons about which we can agree, and others about which we disagree. If we can agree that some reasons are, on reflection, unconvincing, then we have changed the starting-point for another, subsequent conversation, perhaps with a different partner.

Fourth, we can use ‘good reasons’ to refine our claims. These too can be carried to subsequent conversations.

Fifth, we can isolate some issues about which further reflection, or inquiry, would be helpful. While we do not accept that we can refer issues to the empirical world without intermediation, we certainly do agree that there are ways to query the world of events, and procedures to locate and elicit stories, by which we may in a systematic fashion enhance our ability to judge.

Sixth, if we then turn the conversation to making a plan—understood as a story for the future—we can build it in a way which reflects our insights into ‘good reasons’. For example, we understand it should take account of the way in which others, especially those who might be alarmed by what we do, may interpret our actions. The plan should anticipate the place of nature and material needs. And if it concerns military matters, it should complement a larger ‘reassurance’ plan.

In matters concerning war and peace, accounts of reasons cannot ignore the stories which bind and separate participants. An adequate account must almost by definition extend to include a good faith effort to establish the salient shared stories. That means that a good faith negotiation must address differences in salient stories, even if it cannot resolve them. For example, if in the United States and Iran there are circulating very different accounts of the Iranian nuclear energy program, a heavy responsibility falls on *both* parties to avoid circulating unevicenced stories and to assist the other in negotiating agreed understandings of the facts.

*Leading to . . .*

Taking stories seriously is the starting-point of the next chapter. It argues from constitutivist uses of stories that six aims—ably prepared and pursued as an interlocking system of practice—could prevent war or, if that failed, bring force to bear in ways which retained the primacy of politics and restraint.

It is not a pacifist program, though it seeks war avoidance. We thought it necessary and compelling to include means for defense and collective security to guarantee a war avoidance regime. But as we are often reminded, peoples have chosen the ironic path of arming for peace only to see themselves catapulted into wars they did not wish. Does arming for peace merely perpetuate the war script? Or with *defensive* defense, and *minimalist* collective security actions *when other measures have failed*, can the civic script be conserved?



The discussion up to this point, developing how wars are chosen, has not shown what our approach would mean for policy. In this chapter we turn to the policy question. What are the practical requirements of war avoidance? What is a politics of mutual reassurance and how would it be carried on? What follows from the primacy of stories, whether interpretive accounts of the past, or plans expressing intention for the future? How would an approach to policy which privileged accounts, interpretation, intention, internal (domestic) politics, the culture of argument, and the negotiated understanding of decision lead to policies different from those which expressed the standard concerns of statecraft, whether liberal or ‘realist’?

Understanding theories as stories, and widely-retold stories as sources of the worlds we construct, we appreciate that theories have consequences. The mechanist ideologies—‘realism’, scientism, economism—are stories in just this sense. Each has theoretical pretensions. Each lays claim to a privileged description of the world, with far-ranging implications. Adherents insist that the objects, assumptions, problems, processes, and practices on which they focus are the source of reliable knowledge.

Though each takes a different field as its hallmark—governance, nature, production and exchange—it adopts the language of the others. Their assumptions become its assumptions. Each adopts the presuppositions of its counterparts. Nature is ruleful, so the ‘balance of power’ and the economy must be ruleful. Organisms strive to survive, so states pursue security (and “interest defined in terms of power” [Morgenthau]) and economic man dashes headlong on the road of self-interest. As species compete, and the market ensures efficient outcomes, so the anarchy of states ready to war with one another is the best of all possible worlds.

This skepticism may appear too shrill. Even the mechanist ideologies embody partial truths. States make war. Nature is undeniable. Markets can achieve efficiencies. If we would not adopt mechanist stories as our own, we still might choose to draw from them. Moreover, their currency and evident consequentiality help us see that the world we are in is a made world: for example, one can argue persuasively that the world of nuclear stockpiles and nuclear deterrence is a wholly made world, one for which no ‘sufficient cause’ existed except the choice of one leadership, and others, to begin nuclear weapon programs.

To break from the ‘security dilemma’ and make space for effective collective security through the Charter, six interrelated practices are required. Let us call them the *civic script*. They are not novel to this work. What is new here is a double appreciation: first, that all six practices must be fit into a single coherent project, and, second, that the project can succeed only if a wide public *insists upon its enactment*. That insistence should include the public’s *critical rejection of projects which are incompatible with the civic script*. The six practices are these:

#### *Mutual Non-Provocation*

First, states adopt, and publics insist upon, *active non-provocation*. Governments will *avoid the use and threat of force* as an instrument of national policy and avoid other measures which *could reasonably be expected to provoke other’s employment of force in response*. Active non-provocation would rule out direct military interventions, such as those of the Reagan-Bush administrations into Grenada and Panama, and Reagan’s war in Nicaragua, but also assertive acts threatening another state, such as America’s contesting Libya’s claim to internal waters in the Gulf of Sidra by naval maneuvers and air attacks.

#### *Mutual Reassurance*<sup>1</sup>

Reassurance goes beyond non-provocation: it requires *active measures to meet the fears of others*, whatever measures should be

<sup>1</sup> A mutual reassurance regime extends earlier notions of assurances, but draws from them. On mutual reassurance, and the distinction between “deterriers” and “reassurers,” see Michael McGwire, “Dilemmas and Delusions of Deterrence,” *World Policy Journal*, v 1 n 4, Summer 1984, pp. 745–767, p. 748. On offensive and defensive weapons, see Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. 1965), pp. 805–810; Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, XXX (1978), pp. 167–214.

required. The biggest step toward reassurance is *cooperative transparency*: let them look for themselves. The INF Treaty [December 1987] includes several transparency features.

### *Vivid Portrayal*

War is grisly, cruel practice which, experienced or seen portrayed with candor, tends to immunize against itself. It is in society's interest to be systematically reminded of war's horrors, and to show the young unromanticized accounts and portrayals of war. Affirmatively, the same techniques can be used to show political settlement and its results, and what these six practices mean and require.

### *Deterrence by Defensive Means*

As long as some state leaderships see force as a path to gain, others may choose to deter them. You deter by threatening an unattractive cost if they attack. The art of deterrence by defense is to identify ways to exact that price on one's own territory *by means which do not threaten, or do not seriously threaten, one's neighbors at home*. In central Europe of the 1980s these were discussed as 'defensive defense' or 'non-offensive defense', and Gorbachev professed to adopt some of the principle in shifting Soviet forces to a more ostensibly defensive posture.

This works only in the absence of weapons of mass destruction.

### *Nuclear Abolition*

The fifth practice, therefore, is to *renounce nuclear weapons* (and other weapons of mass destruction) and *commit to enforce an abolition regime*. Some weapons platforms—missiles, certain aircraft—would be similarly prohibited. From the time of the 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal Report denuclearization has been acknowledged as an aim by United States officials, even as practice has moved first to expand and then to preserve US nuclear forces. Abolition will require a thoroughgoing regime: clear rules, verification, personnel, organization, and accountability to the United Nations Security Council.

There remains the possibility, however, that a state leadership, or a sub-national movement, will act to upset the civic regime. It might try to build nuclear weapons, or overrun a neighbor, or wreak death upon whole ethnic groups within its borders. The classic response envisioned for challenges to a pacific order is *collective force, broadly sanctioned*.

*Collective Security*

The sixth required practice, then, is to *commit to prompt and effective collective security measures subject to the requirement of minimalism*.

Minimalism requires a fine distinctions between doing too much—excessively ‘prompt and effective measures’—and too little. What minimalism could mean is best shown by examples: (i) *Cheating on an abolition regime*. A clandestine nuclear program is discovered. If political efforts to secure renunciation fail, force is used to destroy accouterments of the nuclear weapons program. Force is limited to the least necessary to destroy prohibited facilities and protect the collective security force. (ii) *Invading a neighbor*. The invaded state calls for collective assistance. Minimalism requires that the force used be strictly limited to halting invading forces and repelling them from the state. (iii) *Civil breakdown*. Where national order has broken down and bands rampage among internal enemies, collective forces intervene *to protect the innocent*. The ‘rules of engagement’—unlike those of early UN forces in Bosnia—would sanction firm action against anyone attacking them. But they would not pursue forces willing to disengage, retire, and refrain from harassment of ‘safe havens’. The force’s mandate would only extend to civil protection, and protecting themselves.

These are policies for the state or ‘collective security force’ engaged in response to war gambits. Are they also duties of individuals? And is the end of war avoidance enough? We will briefly take up these questions and then consider each of the six practices in turn.

*Individual Responsibility*

If the six principles of the civic script are norms for states, are they also incumbent on *individuals*? It may be useful to distinguish affirmative obligations, which might be performed more or less fully, from forbidden acts, which should not be performed at all.

Non-provocation, reassurance, and reliance on strictly defensive forces can only be defined and undertaken from within the state. In practice, leadership will authorize some reassurance measures, but not perform every such measure which can be imagined. Are the measures taken the right ones? Are they enough? The answers will reside in ongoing politics. Whether reciprocity is practiced remains subject to negotiation among states: politics cannot be abolished.



Reciprocity also applies to prohibited steps, but in addition officials can be held personally responsible. Undertaking a forbidden weapons program, and launching war, are discrete actions. There may be dispute whether a forbidden action has taken place, but that is in principle judicable. A somewhat different problem is raised by argument whether an action is or is not in violation of a prohibition. Experience with the Missile Technology Control Regime demonstrates that complex prohibitions cannot be wholly free from ambiguity. Still, we can draw a line between ambiguous and clearly unpermitted conduct. Unpermitted conduct can be criminalized. Acknowledging the ethical problem of holding personally responsible those whose lives or families would have been jeopardized if they had not taken part, we can still extend personal responsibility to leaders who direct and organize criminal conduct.

Similar issues of personal accountability are raised by the International Tribunal (Yugoslavia)<sup>2</sup> and the proposed treaty to establish an international criminal court.

#### *What World to Make?*

The aim is a world in which the state (and sub-national movements) do not wage war. We know this is possible because many political communities, including nation-states, avoid war with one another, sometimes for centuries. We also know that war does not 'break out' or occur accidentally, but that leaderships choose war: they may therefore choose *not* to war.

War avoidance is not the only goal which men and women pursue in society. They choose, for example, goals of personal liberty, or social justice, or ethnic expression and argue that war—however undesirable—is a necessary means to a proper end. People have chosen to fight an anti-colonial revolution, like that of the United States or Algeria, and peasant war against feudal repression, rather than sustain the insult to identity or autonomy. They have chosen to fight to maintain the territorial integrity of the state against secessionists. The argument here is that all such resorts to force, whatever the ethical weight which may justify them, *introduce or reinforce the war script*. Their advocates bear the burden of demonstrating that, in the circumstances in which they find

<sup>2</sup> International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia since 1991.

themselves, the case against war is more than overcome by another harm's being brought to an end. That case is hard to make out. The presumption is against it.

[1] *Mutual Non-Provocation*

Active non-provocation requires more than abstaining from invasion, but it requires at least that. Reagan's invading Grenada was a straightforward provocative act. As it happens, the state it most provoked was Great Britain, a customary ally, and there was no question of war. The United States took Soviet moves in Afghanistan as provocative, and moved to counter Soviet military engagement by arming the moudjahedin. A non-provocation policy would have barred either move.

Imagination requires understanding what steps short of invasion will be gratingly provocative. In 1948 Moscow took the western currency changes in their German occupation zones as a hostile move, and responded by enacting the Berlin Blockade. Both were provocative.

Deployment of weapons with obvious offensive utility is bluntly provocative. Soviet deployment of SS-20s and US deployment of the Ground-Launched Cruise Missile and Pershing II missile were textbook examples of mutually provocative steps.

A leadership committed to mutual non-provocation practices both *deliberate restraint* and *explicit assurance*. Its avoidance of provocation shades into the reassurance acts of a mutual reassurance regime.

It will forego some acts it could undertake, steps—if not actually provocative—possibly *disconcerting* to others. These steps could signal intention to undermine the reciprocity required for mutual non-provocation.

*Rich Fabric of Methods for Pacific Settlement.* Most disputes carry little or no possibility of war. A rich repertoire of methods, opportunities, and understandings of pacific settlement is an important element of a non-provocation regime. The usual response to the question 'what should we do?' is to select, or fashion, a method of pacific settlement suited to the dispute.

*The Norm of Prudent Avoidance.* Wars are purposive acts. It is therefore fitting to talk of *responsibility* for a war. Leaders may have reasons, may "justify" a war; but even if we find their reasons persuasive, in the sense

that we would have acted as they did, they are responsible for the act they have undertaken. They may be asked to give an account of themselves.

What of the government which does not start a war, but takes *steps short of war*, after which war follows? What if a state's acts lead the leadership of another state to conclude that it must war? Is the first state responsible? The second? We have said provocations are in the same tray as attacks. My argument runs this way: if the first reasonably *could* have understood that its assertion could be taken as a provocation, and a *casus belli*, that state bears a strong obligation to have sought and found other ways to assert its claims. I call this the *norm of prudent avoidance*.

Robert McNamara has said of the October 1962 'Cuban Missile Crisis' that "It is *impossible* to predict with a high degree of certainty the consequences of military action."<sup>3</sup> He draws a lesson: "avoid crisis." "Think in advance how to avoid crisis in this nuclear age." McNamara's maxims are good advice, but he encourages the impression that October 1962 was a self-contained event. We stress instead its direct lineal descent from the Bay of Pigs, only a few months earlier, and pre-Castro US interventions in Cuba. The Bay of Pigs, consciously ambiguated, was an act of war, designed to overthrow the Cuban government, but yet not a declared 'war', and not followed by warfare. When October 1962 is taken as one more step in an episode begun at the Bay of Pigs, McNamara's injunction is even more compelling.

*How Much Prudent Avoidance is Enough?* Prudent avoidance does not require submission. It does not require giving way to a bully just to escape war. It does require, however, that in resisting the state act with prudence, strictly limiting its own use of force and subordinating self-help to collective measures. If the bully is determined enough, prudent avoidance cannot prevent war. The onset of WWII shows that a leader who wants war badly enough will surely have it.<sup>4</sup> At least one state, and

<sup>3</sup> Robert McNamara, television interview with Bryant Gumble, 16 October 1987.

<sup>4</sup> So Donald Cameron Watt argues about Hitler: "Neither firmness nor appeasement, the piling up of more armaments nor the demonstration of more determination would stop him ... Hitler's will for war was able to overcome the reluctance with which virtually everybody else approached it. Hitler willed, desired, lusted after war; though not war with France and Britain, at least not in 1939." *How War Came* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), pp. 623, 610. Britain did right to stipulate the trigger for warring: invasion of Poland, resisted by Poles. And then, once that condition was met, Britain was quite as right to refuse lingering calls for further avoidance.

perhaps two, will have *chosen* provocation or war. Each could have chosen otherwise.

Absent a practice of prudent avoidance, states assert ambiguously provocative claims. Leaders do not always act prudently. Sometimes they press their case to the point that—to their surprise, or against their expectations—the other state resorts to force. Here the point is to discern the episode’s unfolding, finding the consequential assertive acts, markers for the points at which the path to war could have been interrupted. *One state’s leadership consciously initiated war. Had another leadership, on purpose or out of simple recklessness, committed a prior imprudent act short of war?* If such a state had instead followed the norm of prudent avoidance it would have escaped onus for war.

*Dual Responsibility.* Both states could be responsible: one acted provocatively, the other—ignoring options short of war—struck back. Like the argument that a state should act prudently to avoid provocation, this claim holds that even after being confronted by a *casus belli* a state bears some obligation to explore paths other than resort to war. Each polity has an obligation to *reintroduce politics* into the relationship with enemies, even at moments—especially at moments—when the theme of war echoes most strongly.

Crisis works against relying on politics. Politics thrives on conversation, perhaps can exist only in a community in which there is talk, and that takes time. The response to a mortal threat of war must take account of being ‘too late’.<sup>5</sup> Then what one can say is that the polity which might expect that it would need to practice politics in a hurry had best lay in place the preconditions for politics before the moment of urgency arrives. There is some nod in this direction in ‘hot line’

<sup>5</sup> The United States and Soviet Union both came to understand how dangerous for both parties development of discriminating anti-satellite capabilities would be. The ASAT controversy of the 1980s, whether anti-satellite systems [ASATs] should be tested, turned on just such a question. ASAT mattered because the US and USSR depended on satellite sensing and reconnaissance to tell whether a missile attack were underway. A sophisticated ASAT capability, which could blind or destroy the other’s satellites without blinding or destroying one’s own, could deny the other that knowledge. Suspecting an attack, it would not know for sure, and not know what to do. Denied ‘launch on warning’, if it did not launch blindly its missiles could be destroyed in their silos. Moreover, once an ASAT system were tested it would be hard to tell whether it was being built, bought and deployed. Too many uncertainties lay ahead if ASAT were tested. In deciding to forego ASAT testing, Moscow and Washington exercised *deliberate restraint*.

agreements; at least, they recognize that avoiding nuclear war may require that some messages be reliably exchanged. Hurried transactions in crisis are hardly an adequate substitute for rich political relations, sufficiently rich that disputants can find complementarity in circumstances of deep suspicion and hostility.

*Distinction Between Restraint and Assurance.* Restraint is called for if a proposed act, departing from existing stabilities, would in consequence lead others to urge war or war preparations. If the act could provoke serious suspicion, distrust, doubt, or fear there is good reason to forego or alter it. Restraint buys time. Perhaps unthreatening ways can be found to achieve the sought-for end.

Explicit assurances, quite different, satisfy others that they know what you are doing. They address the risk that *uncertainty—whether acts are being undertaken, or could be undertaken*—will provoke fear, suspicion, doubt and distrust.

Both address suspicion, and assume that one's diplomacy is being conducted within the fabric of the civic script.

Restraint concerns action; reassurance is about appropriate and adequate information and access.<sup>6</sup> Reassurance cannot be accomplished unilaterally. Reassurance is not achieved unless other parties obtain information, not otherwise available, by which their fears and doubts can be allayed. For reassurance, therefore, cooperation is required. The INF Treaty embodies several reassurance provisions, including on-site inspection and reconnaissance satellite surveillance of warehouse facilities.<sup>7</sup> Although these provisions may assure the other party even if they are only latent, unexercised, their full capacity to assure requires that the other actively cooperate in using the opportunity agreed.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, states have long sought intelligence to reassure themselves. John Lewis Gaddis cites the "reconnaissance revolution" offered by satellite reconnaissance as "a development that may well rival in importance the 'nuclear revolution' that preceded it ..." through lowering the danger of surprise attack. "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, Spring 1986, v 10 n 4, pp. 99–142, pp. 123–125. The problem is that assurance has not proven sufficient to meet the fears of the more skeptical.

<sup>7</sup> Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, 8 December 1987. Article XII §3 provides for opening roofs of structures housing road-mobile ground-launched ballistic missiles so that they could be photographed from satellites, within six hours of a request to do so by the other Party.

*[2] Mutual Reassurance*

*State and Authoritative Decision in a Mutual Reassurance Regime.* We take the state<sup>8</sup> as the usual locus of war decisions. It does not follow that we celebrate the state, or assume that its role should be strengthened. On the contrary, a sustained mutual reassurance regime should open the door to a more circumscribed state, a qualified state, a state making its way in a world of diverse authorities and a vigorous civil society, a state dedicated to righting *internal* injustice and securing the ordinary lives of its citizens.

Still, today it is the state which mobilizes and pays armies, and deploys them in putative defense against other states, so we cannot ignore the state as an organizing arena of political life. The state can also attempt to control communication, on which mutual reassurance is absolutely dependent. For mutual reassurance to be carried on, trusted representatives of the state to be assured must be able to send back reports based upon persuasive access. To mobilize ‘societal verification’, they must also believe that accounts of the abolition regime can circulate, and that locals who wish to submit candid reports are able to reach monitors.

States routinely seek to block and distort communication in time of war. The Argentinian *junta*, for example, in the spring of 1982 concealed from the Argentine people the situation of its ill-fated forces on the Malvinas until no concealment was possible. Nonetheless, against this, there remains even in authoritarian systems an autonomy of authorship, the possibility of accounts which ignore the preferences of the state, and which challenge the state itself. The Center cannot silence all of those whom it claims to govern, nor can it altogether suppress—at this point in history—a variety of accountabilities. The state is contingent, and roles in authoritative positions are held contingently. This is a major qualification on the centrality and autonomy of the state.

A modern state cannot close its borders. It can try, but it will pay a severe economic cost, and undermine its authority. Argentinians who

<sup>8</sup> or in civil war the movement or region. Although the customary view of the state stresses its executive authority, members of a nation-state are also bound by informal understandings. In effect—and most of the time—they practice a non-provocation community, or an internal mutual reassurance regime. Civil war represents the extreme breakdown of those understandings.

wanted contrary accounts of the 1982 war could get them from foreign sources. Technological reconnaissance grows more capable: war preparations are less and less easily hidden. These new circumstances help make mutual reassurance possible. A mutual reassurance regime requires state restraint, voluntary forbearance, a degree of transparency, an effective diminution of sovereignty. The state is acknowledged, but qualified. Yet the state remains the place of authoritative decision.

Decision collapses a complex and argued exchange into a concise and explicit choice. Nonetheless, decision does not settle arguments conclusively. Decisions are interpretations, albeit of a special kind, and are subject to the contest which characterizes all interpretation. Decisions are disputed. They are unevenly enacted. They are evaded. They are undermined. Agencies and citizens not wholly under central control can prepare or commit acts which threaten other states.

A government may be, in principle, responsible for the acts of those within the territory it governs. But it must also consider whether a foreign state would use its territory without its knowledge as a base for hostile acts. How would it assure other states that no such threat existed? Still, a state's main object in reassurance is to show that it intends no harm. A leadership committed to an active reassurance regime would work to identify and anticipate sources of fear, and then help others satisfy themselves that their anxieties were not well-founded.

*Restraint.* Just what razor is to be applied to distinguish between prudent military measures and those which, in the name of reassurance, should be foregone, is a policy issue of great delicacy. There do, however, seem to be two criteria already applied. Is the proposed measure a *qualitative departure* from established practice? And is the proposed measure both clearly *defensive* in character and poorly suited for attack? Acting as before, and adopting a defensive posture, would appear to support the norm of restraint. Stricter standards would be required to effect a *transition* from one set of established practices to another, more 'stable' or at a lower level of arms.

Mutual reassurance requires restraint in weapons systems (what systems, and in what numbers), deployment (what and where), personnel and reserves, declaratory policy, training, and the conversion of research to applications which upset limits and capabilities on which the potentially insecure rely. This was part of the conversation between the United States and Soviet Union in 1988 and 1989, Washington insisting

it must see evidence of defensive military policy, if it were to take Gorbachev's claims seriously, through actual change in Soviet force structure and practices. Earlier in the 1980s Moscow and Washington quarreled about the Reagan Star Wars program, arguing at what point research and testing crossed a line jeopardizing restraint. The issue was reborn in 1999 over ABM Treaty change and US proposals for missile defense. Novel weapon systems—the pace and purposes of their development—always pose tasks for mutual reassurance.

We can anticipate future issues. For example, as long as Russia and the United States practice mutual nuclear deterrence, an effective submarine detection system, which exposed the location of ballistic-missile submarines and laid them open to attack, would fundamentally disturb their security.

*The Concept of an International Regime.* Textbooks on foreign relations typically observe that the Westphalian system of state sovereignties has become universal. Sovereignty is assumed, anticipated, and exercised, and inter-state relations acknowledge sovereignty, subject to carefully-drawn exceptions. This system appears to be a classic type of international regime, which Stephen Krasner defines as “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations.”

It is an altogether different matter to take as the central fact of international politics not simple sovereignties but negotiated complementarities. This study—while not denying the force of claims made on behalf of sovereignty—argues that the fabric of international affairs consists of negotiated projects. Whether a project is “complementary” in the sense of being non-coercive, or whether some combination of complementarity and coercion is tolerable, is itself something negotiated across choices. Complementarity remains the rhetoric, the preference of the coerced party, and the norm. This view of regime as an ongoing quest for complementarity is not the only possible view, but it is altogether consistent with Stephen Krasner's definition.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” in Stephan Krasner [ed], *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 1–22. Cf. Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, “Theories of International Regimes,” *International Organization* 41, 3, Summer 1987, pp. 491–517. They distinguish the theory of hegemonic stability, strategic and game-theoretic approaches, functional theories, and cognitive



The regimes of greatest interest to us are those which are entered voluntarily, or in response to circumstance, and in search of better results for both parties than they could achieve alone.

Incompatible global regimes can coexist. For example, state sovereignty and nuclear deterrence exist at the same time, but deterrence requires colluding in openness to nuclear attack, contradicting sovereignty. Sovereignty and free trade are also classic incompatibles. They coexist, but from time to time government is pressed by domestic constituencies to abandon free trade. These incompatibles are analogous, at the level of the state, to Gregory Bateson's "double bind."

Regime implies order. A regime must be sufficiently coherent and enduring to be thought to exist, but as the expression of a Reading it will wax and then wane. It will [ultimately] pass; it is impermanent. Although the metaphor is imperfect, or even misleading, we think of regimes as at least provisionally stable. This is the case of the deterrence regime, and of any reassurance regime.

War, on the other hand, signals instability and catastrophic change, if not for all parties at least for the weaker against whom war is undertaken.

*The Difficulty of Demonstrating Negatives.* There may be obstacles to showing that a prohibited act has been performed, or that it is being performed at a given place and time, but that is a determinate task, which concludes on establishing the evidence. It is quite a different matter to show that an act is *not* being performed *at any of the possible places at which such an act might be being performed*, and even more difficult to demonstrate that *not only is the act not being performed now [at any site], but it has not been performed previously [at any site]*. Then imagine the still more daunting task of showing that the act *could not be performed [at any site] for some duration of time into the future*. But that, of course, is what would be required in the exchange of assurances for a nuclear abolition regime.

Take as a straightforward example the question whether a state—say Israel, or South Africa, or Pakistan—tested a nuclear device in 1979. Was the Vela satellite observation of September 1979 evidence of a nuclear test, or not? Could Israel have tested underground without external detection? If one asks then whether a party *could* test—could

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theories. My position assumes a welfare objective defined through the interplay of accounts and decisions: a functional aim cognitively defined and achievable—if at all—by political negotiation.

test on short notice, or in a relatively short period of time—the issue becomes dependent upon some access to facilities and a judgment whether those facilities exhaust the means by which the state—say, Israel—could test.

If the Israeli leadership not only had not tested but wished to reassure its neighbors that it did not intend to develop nuclear weapons—a contrafactual hypothesis—there are several steps it could have taken. It could have opened its nuclear research facilities and possible testing sites without exception. It could have welcomed technically qualified observers of adequate neutrality to assess its inventory of equipment. It could have enabled inspectors to remain on site. It could have permitted access to Israeli personnel.

The problem could be tractable in a small country. Even in that case there remains the possibility of concealing actions abroad. A large state, one with extensive industrial capabilities and the resources to commit to concealment, could offer false assurances. The issue is not, however, whether the risk of evasion can be reduced to zero, but whether the risk of *militarily consequential* evasion can be made *acceptably small*. This is a much easier problem. It is especially easier if, as is the case for all methods of warfare known to us now, the evasion must be practiced over an extended period of time, engage substantial numbers of people, and be supplied by significant quantities of material goods. Even if laboratories should prove false the dictum that no biological warfare agent is better suited to war than existing nerve gas, for example, a program of cooperative participation adequate to guard against the creation and dissemination of militarily useful chemical and biological agents could, in principle, be devised.<sup>10</sup>

*Transparence.* A mutual reassurance program requires greater transparence than modern military-industrial states have permitted. Salient facilities—military installations and stores, laboratories, manufacturing plants—must be made accessible. That means there can be no ‘secret’ bases. Further, since any location could conceal a forbidden practice, there can in principle be no place which is closed.

<sup>10</sup> A clue as to how this might be done is contained in the original Acheson-Lilienthal report, *A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy*, Washington, D.C., 16 March 1946. Skeptical of the efficacy of an “army of inspectors roaming the earth,” they propose instead a combination of familiar inspection techniques and the movement of specialists of different nationalities among the world’s nuclear laboratories.

The list of sites which would then have to be open to short-notice inspection is startling: commercial laboratories, commercial computer engineering facilities, code rooms, private homes, archives of diplomatic cables, advanced aircraft manufacturing plants, maternity hospitals. Nor is this an idle speculation. These very questions were raised in Washington in 1988 among officials debating the acceptability of “anywhere, anytime” inspection of sites in which nuclear-armed cruise missiles might be concealed.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and resulting Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) have brought giant strides toward openness, in exchanging numbers and in CFE observer provisions, but that is not full transparency. Even negotiated aircraft reconnaissance (for example, by Russia over the United States) is hobbled by agreed limitations. It is not yet “anywhere, anytime” inspection.

Reassurance is easier if the prohibited act requires tell-tale preparations. For example, chemical weapons require precursor chemicals, production and distribution of which may be amenable to accounting methods. A conventional land attack requires that forces be mobilized and massed. In such cases adequate reassurance can be given by waiting for the signal event, rather than searching for all prohibited activity.

### *[3] Vivid Portrayal*

As memory of major war fades, civil society can assure that war’s implacable horrors are known to successive generations. No exaggeration, no departure from well-established standards of historical representation, is required. Memory could also be refreshed by portrayal of historical cases of pacific settlement. The aim would not be to propagandize, but to hedge and protect against ignorance. In keeping with the spirit of this text, we think of multiple portrayals, and vigorous controversy about agency and aims in episodes.

Modern graphic and media capabilities invite vivid portrayals. Documentary film, personal accounts, and new capabilities for the graphical display of summary data are now abundant. Such an exhibit can be found in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. A lens can be pointed to the future. Because future war could depart in means, and exceed in scale and scope, prior war, producers could bring to their

models the skills of imaginative cinema, as did Industrial Light & Magic in the Star Wars films. Something of the sort was also accomplished in the making of the 1965 film *The War Game*, which depicts social breakdown and horrendous consequences following a dramatized nuclear attack on Britain. But *The War Game* illustrates another difficulty: the BBC produced it, but then would not air it.<sup>11</sup> Argument about how to portray historical war will be serious enough; the politics of portraying hypothetical war could be even more tangled.<sup>12</sup>

When sharp dispute and contention occurs, and it seems possible that one or more parties might initiate violence, the war-avoidance regime confronts a crisis. At this juncture the new technologies of presentation and simulation could be drawn upon to explore alternative avenues to avoid war, and to offer participants in the crisis an opportunity to visualize possible consequences.<sup>13</sup> At the Dayton Conference preceding the ‘peace’ imposed on Bosnia, the United States used technological displays to show faction leaders how alternative mappings of boundaries would alter the regions they would control.

Paths to sought-for outcomes could be investigated, and enhanced, through intensive and imaginative simulation. Parties in mediation, or negotiating directly, could use visual representation to make wishes and concerns clearer to their counterparts; they could explore alternatives jointly. Third parties, concerned onlookers, could also represent their visions graphically, modeling ‘peace’ and its preconditions.

Resources and skills required to create and publish effective demonstrations are now widely held. Capabilities once the exclusive province of governments, networks, and major corporations are now

<sup>11</sup> *The War Game*, available on videotape, is described in the catalog as an “exceptional pseudo-documentary which uses remarkably realistic footage to document what might happen if Britain were to experience a thermonuclear attack. Originally produced by the BBC but never aired because it was judged ‘too disturbing’. Indeed it is.” <http://www.nyfavideo.com/content/cat-WAR.htm> [seen 26 June 2000]

<sup>12</sup> Consider the capitulation of the Smithsonian Institution to demands to gut and sanitize its planned 1995 exhibit on the aircraft *Enola Gay*, from which the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima 6 August 1945. Text consistent with well-confirmed historical understandings was removed under pressure from WWII servicemen and right-wing chauvinists in the US Congress. Cf. Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied : Lobbying the History of Enola Gay* (New York: Copernicus, 1996); Barton J. Bernstein, “The Struggle Over History,” in Philip Nobile [ed.], *Judgment at the Smithsonian* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995); and in the same volume, the text of the proposed exhibit.

<sup>13</sup> Joellen Pretorius offered this suggestion.

accessible to groups throughout civil society. Once created, a picturing or simulation can be duplicated at close to zero cost and disseminated with few limits. No state action is required. The Net assures access. Simulations can be carried on jointly at separated sites, reviewed in on-line conference, and extensively shared. Available on-line, freely reproducible, and easily consulted, holdings of texts and documents, documentary graphics, simulations, projections, and commentaries will constitute a 'free public library' for civil society.

Because these capabilities are so powerful, civil society will confront efforts to capture, control and deny communications freedom. Some governments attempt this today, especially China and Myanmar, and many governments—among them the most self-congratulatory democracies—are seeking and obtaining the legal and technical means to surveill Net and wireless communications. Some have established military units to conduct 'information warfare' should they some day choose to do so. Purveyors of hate, coercion, and violence will certainly exploit the Web in the future. Early returns suggest that the Bureau of State Security is losing the censorship race, and that hate-merchants are best countered on open ground. It is much less clear that privacy of person and conversations can be assured against the intrusive State. How to sustain effective freedom on the Net and Web is a key political task.

*Real-Time Display.* Correspondingly, actual events, in 'real time' and 'near real time', can now be pictured and the pictures shown globally within minutes. Using overhead sensing and refinements in computer processing of data from different times and different frequencies, imagers and analysts have been steadily enhancing what can be seen and acquiring more meaningful views. In the realm of war scripts, the US military has devised plans, and committed to them, to achieve real-time portrayal of battlefield conditions combining satellite imagery, data from aircraft platforms, and conventional intelligence. Not only are capabilities growing, but they are moving from secret agencies to the marketplace, and being fostered and deployed by a more diverse set of states. These changes have already had profound consequences for monitoring and verification of agreed practices. As global bandwidth increases, there will be fewer limits on the number and types of displays (detail, video) accessible to the public. Adapting these new capabilities to war avoidance will be an important feature of any mutual reassurance regime.

*[4] Reliance on Defensive Means*

*To Shape the Military as a Defensive Force.* A force-in-being deters. We distinguish two forms of deterrence. One anticipates taking a price from an attacking force on one's own territory. The second promises to strike at an attacker's home territory, in retaliation. The forces required for these two tasks are very different, though it remains true that 'defensive' forces can be used to attack and 'offensive' forces include systems suited for defense.

The paramount difference, however, is that a defensive force suffers attack on its territory. Retaliatory deterrence tries to move combat away from the national territory, wherever possible to the original attacker's territory, or to the attacker's forces *en route* and vulnerable lines of supply.

Why would a national government posture itself to fight on its own territory, where its own populace would be inevitable victims, rather than on the territory of its enemy? Citizens will certainly ask. The answer is that its aim is to reduce the likelihood that there will be fighting at all. It shows that its defensive intent is serious by *accepting the risk of attack on its own territory*, in return for which it makes a claim on neighbors that they too adopt a non-offensive posture.

*Defensive Defense.* In the late 1980s there was a surge of interest in one form of assurance: defensive defense, or non-offensive defense, or—sometimes—national defense.<sup>14</sup> However phrased, the idea is to deter attack by deploying forces at home which can offer a credible, even formidable, defense against invasion, but which are not credible offensive forces against similarly-armed states. Such forces might procure and deploy interceptors but not deep-strike aircraft, anti-tank weapons but not tanks, obstacles but not bridging kits, and so forth. They would tailor training to the defense of their national territory. Gorbachev's military reforms adopted some of the language and concepts of non-offensive defense. Reductions set out in the CFE Treaty move all forces "from the Atlantic to the Urals" toward more clearly defensive size, structure, and distribution within national territory.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Anders Boserup and Robert Neild [eds], *The Foundations of Defensive Defence* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) was signed 19 November 1990 and entered into force 9 November 1992.

initial result is a dual system, in that strategic nuclear forces remain in being, but conventional forces are reduced and reshaped. If defensive defense were adopted, there would follow successive intermediate force structures and practices which retained hybrid offensive-defensive capabilities, but at reduced size, progressively less suited to gain by war. Technological trends may render defensive defense an attractive option.

*Civilian Resistance as a National Defense: Gene Sharp.* Gene Sharp has argued at least since the mid-1960s that national policies of unilateral disarmament and civilian resistance would better ensure security than military forces in being. Sharp acknowledges Gandhian roots. Civilian resistance, in Sharp's lexicon, is fully-prepared, committed, and unflinching harassment of any attempt by an invader to turn occupation to economic advantage. Sharp would sabotage export installations and infrastructure; to invading personnel, immune from indignity or physical harm, he would practice the ordinary appeals of men and women to their common humanity. In effect, Sharp posits a reassurance regime, but insists that it is prudent and realistic to adopt reassurance *unilaterally*, as an effective means of bringing others to the same view.<sup>16</sup>

*Transition to Minimal Security Forces: Randall Forsberg.* Randall Forsberg has sketched a multi-step transition from the present to a largely demilitarized future. Steps are designed to offer successive reassurance as cuts are made and entire systems and capabilities eliminated.

The non-defensive functions of armed force ... must be eliminated through a series of clearly demarcated steps, each of which will create a plateau of military, political, and technological stability that can last, if need be, for decades. Each step must be durable and desirable in its own right, regardless of when or even whether any of the subsequent steps are taken.<sup>17</sup>

Arguing that much of the arming of major states arises from their intention to assert themselves in the Third World, she stipulates an early abandonment of such commitments. At the end of the process armed services are reduced to internal security and coast guard forces. Threat of aggression has been undone by abandoning its means.

<sup>16</sup> Gene Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-Based Deterrence and Defence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> Randall Forsberg, "Confining the Military to Defense as a Route to Disarmament," *World Policy Journal*, 1983, pp. 285-318.

*Military and Naval Force in a [Largely] Non-Provocation World.* In principle, the nation-states could adopt non-provocation practices at their current levels of armament and force size. And they could gradually institute mutual reassurance practices.

Large forces-in-being may prove politically necessary while some states practice, but others do not, restraint and reassurance. Even if all states with significant military forces were to adopt such practices, the possibilities of breakdown or breakout would be cited as grounds to continue to maintain effective militaries. In this period military and naval force would remain ambiguously defensive and offensive. As states practiced greater transparency in a non-provocative posture, intelligence analysts would pose new questions and develop new sources.

Much of existing military force could be given up without the major states losing their capacity to use force abroad. Only after a substantial period of non-provocation and disarmament could we actually speak of a transition toward a world in which neither war nor large-scale spending on weapons was judged necessary. In all but some of the radical transition schemes, military and naval force serves as a source of continuing reassurance as forces are drawn down. But once the nation-states have created a [largely] non-provocation world, what is the military's role?

A non-provocation world is not inconsistent with clearly defensive forces, deployed at home. Some residual force-in-being would be attractive even to the most assured leaderships, on several arguments: that others' commitment to accommodation was imperfect or unreliable, that domestic order required the ability to enforce executive authority, that assets abroad might require protection, and that the state might be called on to perform collective security or coast guard activities. There is, after all, no way to ensure that small militaries, or even police units, will not be employed aggressively. If collective security serves as the ultimate resort, whether in a transition to non-provocation or in deterring new interest in force, then there must be some military capabilities in being which could be called upon to enforce effective collective security.

*[5] Nuclear Abolition. Prohibition of Other Weapons with Large-Scale Effects.*

*Abolition of Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons.* There is no security in a world of nuclear weapons, or of other weapons which can



only be used to threaten, or cause, widespread death. These weapons can be subject to abolition, and the means by which they could be reintroduced into military inventories made subject to control. Mutual reassurance requires this.

The Biological Weapons Convention [1972] and the Chemical Weapons Convention [1993] bar possession of two categories of weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons are the subject of the Non-Proliferation Treaty [1968]. The NPT acknowledges existing nuclear weapons programs, in effect permitting them for a time, but also puts abolition into the text:

The States concluding this Treaty ...

Desiring to further the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States in order to facilitate ... the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control ... [h]ave agreed as follows: ...

#### Article VI

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.<sup>18</sup>

This commitment, binding on the original five declared nuclear weapon states, is only to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith’. Some argue that the nuclear weapon states made no commitment to abandon their nuclear weapons, at least not before all states were ready to commit to ‘general and complete disarmament’, but as treaty articles must have some purpose they appear bound at a minimum to talk ‘in good faith’ about how nuclear abolition and widespread and substantial disarmament, if not literally ‘general and complete disarmament’, could be accomplished in the world of praxis. The United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China—the N5—have resisted entering such talks. Some non-nuclear weapon states argue that the nuclear weapon states should commit to weapon denuclearization ‘by a date certain’, but they have refused. This issue is now on the agenda at successive NPT Review Conferences.

<sup>18</sup> Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements*. August 1980, pp. 90–94.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference an extraordinary clarification was achieved. The N5 agreed to the consensus document issued by the conference, including a “principle of irreversibility” and a commitment, to which they must answer in future, to nuclear abolition:

¶15. 6. An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI.

There remain ample opportunities for the N5 to delay, but the political context has changed.

Abolition could be reached through a treaty commitment to simultaneously surrender weapons to a joint authority and their subsequent destruction. It could also be achieved unilaterally, or by shifting weapons from ‘ready’ status to a status in which they could not be used (or used easily, or soon). But abolition, in the final analysis, can only be thoroughgoing abolition.

*Novel Weapons Having Large-Scale Effects.* The principles of delegitimation and prohibition, carried by analogy from the CWC and BWC, and from proposals for nuclear abolition, must be applied *mutatis mutandis* to new threatening weapons. The novelty may lie in lethality, method of propagation, means of delivery, and in the type of destructive effect. Quantitative change may, but need not, come to be understood as qualitative change: nuclear weapons were perceived at first by some as ‘bigger blockbusters’.

The original BWC was negotiated when biological agents were only those known to cause disease, and chemical weapons—by comparison to biologicals—much more predictable and easier to use. Now we understand that ‘genetic engineering’ can create organisms with novel combinations of genetic features, but we have no idea what the limits on creation of deadly pathogens may be.

It will require further ingenuity to extend principles developed here to weapons which threaten people and their social structures in radically different ways. A novel biological pathogen, spreading epidemically, is already speculated on in science-fiction. Military laboratories are designing and testing powerful laser weapons. Bill Joy argues that entities which are *very small* and *self-replicating*, whether digital, mechanical, or biological, could pose unprecedented threats. They might appear as fragments of computer code, genetically-engineered

organisms, or molecular-level nanotechnological machines, or—yet more scary—combinations of these, such as very small devices which could be remotely controlled across the Net, even a miniature robotics laboratory which could produce invisibly tiny robotic tools and weapons under software control.<sup>19</sup> If any of these could be created and launched without detection, for example by a small tight team without tell-tale material requirements, their self-replicating character could render them fully as dangerous as they would be if produced by a state bent on war.

Prohibiting such devices *as weapons* may prove difficult to enforce, but the political means and requirements are strictly analogous to those required, for example, to prohibit nuclear weapons.

#### *[6] Collective Security*

The existing United Nations Charter delineates a collective security regime. Each of the five permanent members (P5) may block action. If the veto were removed, the Security Council reconstituted, and sufficient force put at the Security Council's command, the United Nations could meet the terms of the required collective security regime.

Events of the 1990s suggest that a reasonable test of United Nations military capacity would be that it protect states against attack and—a state having broken down—innocents against mass violence. The Charter language is both less explicit and more comprehensive. It confers on the Security Council “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”<sup>20</sup>

The United Nations has not taken on either task, though it lent its name to the defense of South Korea in 1950. The key cases of the 1990s are Iraq (Gulf War and nuclear program), Somalia, and ex-Yugoslavia (especially Bosnia and Kosovo).

In Somalia the state broke down. The UN exercise in Somalia began as an intervention to support humanitarian assistance. When the UN's activities were opposed by force, ‘peace and security’ for the Somalis required only that protection be extended to those who wished it, but a

<sup>19</sup> William Joy, “Why the Future Doesn't Need Us,” *Wired*, April 2000. <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html> [seen 14 May 2000]

<sup>20</sup> The text of Article 24, Section 1 reads: “1. In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.”

confusion of roles and the parallel presence of a US force *not under UN authority* led to a failed mission.

A similar argument can be made about Bosnia. There too the prime need was to protect innocents. A delicate determination of preferences and a mapping of preferences onto geography would have been, without doubt, an undertaking of extraordinary political and physical difficulty, but how else could the civic script have been preserved?

The Gulf War saw the Bush Administration, bent on conserving the war script, insist on its autonomy from UN control. Certainly the United States and its 'coalition' partners went to the Security Council to obtain consent. But the practical effect of that consent was to immunize the United States from the Charter, not to bring to life the Charter provisions for collective security.

Only the work of the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), created in 1991 to rid Iraq of any nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon program, informs the script we propose here. Its legal basis is the Charter's broad grant to the Security Council to act on behalf of international peace and security. The Security Council explicitly invoked its powers under Chapter VII. The preambular sections of Resolution 687 cite Iraq's failure to meet its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its membership in the International Atomic Energy Agency. From the vantage of this work, the Special Commission is both an instrument of 'abolition' and an instrument of 'collective security', though in both cases the Special Commission is establishing new precedent. Despite replacement of UNSCOM by a new instrumentality, the Security Council intends monitoring of Iraq to continue.<sup>21</sup>

Although the main tests of collective security will be challenges to states and to weapon abolition regimes, there are possibilities for conflict

<sup>21</sup> On 17 December 1999 the Security Council established a successor to UNSCOM. In doing so, it explicitly invoked its powers under Chapter VII of the Charter:

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council today established the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to undertake the responsibilities of the former United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), which was charged with monitoring the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The new Commission will take over UNSCOM's assets, liabilities and archives and is mandated to establish and operate a reinforced, ongoing monitoring and verification system, address unresolved disarmament issues and identify additional sites to be covered by the new monitoring system.

UN Press Release SC/6775, 17 December 1999.

in local, particular disputes. States claim interests abroad. Leaving aside merely notional interests, ‘their’ ships, commercial aircraft, reconnaissance capabilities, firms and citizens are all found outside their territory. What if these are threatened, or the freedom of movement on which they depend not respected? In the sovereignty paradigm, the standard answer is that this is the responsibility of the state in whose territory they find themselves. Details may be, and often are, spelled out in explicit agreements. But what of interests outside the jurisdiction of any state? This problem is as old as piracy. These interests—which all states have in common—are properly objects of collective guarantees.

*Conditions for Secure, Flexible, Enduring Settlement*

We have observed that non-provocation shades into reassurance, and stressed that without abolition of nuclear weapons other reassurance measures would be meaningless. The measures proposed are political, cultural, deterrent, and purely technical: collective security offers a last resort, if the war avoidance regime is threatened. The object is an enduring, flexible ‘settlement’ which enables both security and a vigorous, ongoing politics.

To situate the problem of future ‘settlement’, it is helpful to put it alongside Kalevi Holsti’s thoughtful study of historical settlements.<sup>22</sup> Holsti surveys five major settlements of relations among the powers of their times, leading to some concluding maxims. “How are we to evaluate these great attempts to build international order?”, he asks. He then proposes to construct a ‘hypothetical international order’ among states which share desire for sovereignty, security, economic and social welfare, and latitude and freedom in making foreign and domestic policy. They may want to control, reduce, or eliminate war, “but they would rather suffer uncertainty, insecurity, and some war than lose their independence.” With excessive apology and qualification, he identifies eight features which make a stable international order, “probably necessary conditions.”

- a system of governance: able to decide “what constitutes tolerable foreign policy behavior,” identify transgressions, and be “prepared to act jointly” to enforce rules and norms

<sup>22</sup> Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

- legitimacy: a postwar settlement incorporating principles of justice
- assimilation: bringing the defeated back in
- a deterrent system: combining victors and vanquished
- conflict-resolving procedures and institutions
- consensus on war:

System members must recognize and acknowledge that war is the fundamental problem facing the community of states. Those who design the order should develop and foster strong norms against the use of force and carefully articulate those circumstances in which it might be justified. Such circumstances, aside from self-defense, would include the collective or delegated use of force for the welfare and benefit of the society of states.

- procedures for peaceful change
- anticipation of future issues:

The territorial settlements, institutions, and system norms should include provision for identifying, monitoring, and handling not just the problems that created the previous war but future conflicts as well.<sup>23</sup>

Holsti's understanding of a stable settlement relies heavily on giving currency to some kinds of stories and actively discouraging others. He proposes to bandage festering sores and quiet revenge, by substituting full participation by those defeated in the pre-settlement war. He would preempt corrosive internal dispute by fostering legitimacy through justice. He makes space for stories with *content*. His hypothetical world offers places in which plans can be discussed and negotiated: 'conflict-resolving procedures and institutions', 'procedures for peaceful change', 'anticipation of future issues'. And there is one location in which the community as a whole can settle its text and choose a common plan: institutions of governance which ultimately decide 'enforcement'.

Holsti's world is one of states which above all value their own autonomy and persistence, their "uniqueness and separateness." He does not expect to see this go away. The 'nuclear reality' seems confined to the nuclear weapon states. "The costs of war and armaments may have risen substantially, but they have not yet fundamentally altered the decision calculus: war remains one of several techniques of advancing and protecting values, beliefs, and interests." He observed change over time:

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336–339.

We have chronicled changing attitudes toward the use of force over the past three centuries. These have been significant in many ways, in some respects even revolutionary. In the industrial countries in particular, there is a strong presumption against the use of force. But that presumption has not yet taken on the character of a universal legal or moral imperative. For the foreseeable future the Clausewitzian model of war remains regrettably valid.<sup>24</sup>

How do Holsti's maxims differ from the norms derived from *War Stories*? There is a great deal of overlap. I adopt Holsti's maxims as my own. He posits a consensus that war is the main problem, a deterrent system, and prepared readiness to "act jointly"—a collective security system. Holsti's view is somewhat more institutional and procedural, whereas *War Stories* assumes ongoing politics and negotiation, in civil society as well as in institutions, and places greater weight on a shared political culture rejecting war. Holsti seems resigned to Clausewitz "for the foreseeable future"; *War Stories* argues that war is a coercive practice, not a continuation of politics properly understood, and that political initiatives, rendered urgent by the existence and deployment of nuclear weapons, can achieve nuclear abolition and realistic barriers to major war. So there is some difference about what is *possible* in our present circumstances.

The proposed policies and practices advanced in *War Stories* are interwoven, a coherent whole. Each part supports the others. To review:

- non-provocation: a political policy with cultural roots
- mutual reassurance: a political policy, with cultural roots and technical features
- vivid portrayal: cultural initiatives, with political effects
- defensive defense: a political policy, implemented socially and technically, to deter attack and to encourage others to abandon the means of attack
- nuclear abolition: a purely technical step, but with political consequences
- collective security: a politico-military precaution, requiring political agreement, technical means, and ongoing renewed political support.

Non-provocation and mutual reassurance address fear and distrust. They complement vivid portrayal of war and defensive defense in redrawing the repertoire of *appropriate responses to dispute and*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333–334.

*contention*. Under the war script, war is an *appropriate response*, in some circumstances, by which states assert and defend their claims. The civic script turns on a different repertoire of appropriate action. Disputes will be negotiated: the resources of negotiation and politics are always sufficient to design an outcome better than threatening or making war. Disputants may still choose war; designs do not guarantee restraint; but if they follow the civic script leaderships will elect pacific settlement.

Deterrence remains a central theme. Several of these measures contribute to deterrence. When two states are locked in a serious argument the incentive to find a political solution is higher if each believes force would not work, or would be very costly. Established defensive capabilities warn that there will be no easy victory.

Finally, abandoning and destroying nuclear weapons, a technical step, logically ensures that those weapons cannot be used.

When the UN Security Council seized itself of Iraq's nuclear weapon program, it was simply recognizing that a country's having nuclear weapons is in itself a threat to 'international peace and security'. (The irony that this same recognition is not extended to the United States, Russia, and other nuclear weapon states has not been lost to other UN members.) In a nuclear-weapon-free world, therefore, collective security requires enforcing the prohibition against nuclear weapons, if political means have failed. There are, then, two situations in which collective security mechanisms could be invoked—attack (or threatened attack) and violation of the nuclear prohibition—and in turn a political requirement that the means to act in both cases be prepared and fully institutionalized. I leave 'as an exercise for the student' whether prohibitions against non-nuclear weapon systems, such as biological agents, must also be collectively enforced, or enforceable, if the weapon is merely investigated, or designed, or developed, but is not deployed or used. For in that case, can it be said that political means have been exhausted?

Credible collective security measures must be determined and certain. What Jeremy Bentham said of domestic justice—that it must be swift and sure—is no less true of international justice. But the global war avoidance regime is at risk at each stage. The case for action will rarely be uncomplicated; action must not be premature, or too late; and its basis must be widely agreed. Action having been decided, the means must be in hand: throughout the 1990s the Security Council declared objectives while its members declined sufficient money, equipment, and personnel. Then, in the third stage, action must often be sustained longer than was



first thought. For collective security to be credible, it must work, it must be believed to work, and it must work on terms that most participants in the regime consider sound and just.

It also must not be called upon too often. Or, to put it another way, if the global regime as a whole enjoys broad support, states will rarely allow matters to reach the point of last resort.

*Partial Models of Mutual Reassurance Regimes:  
'No-War Security Communities'*

There are models for a world without war. These models are limited to two, three, or several states. Their leaderships and peoples *assume* that war between or among them will not be undertaken.

They make no preparations for such a war (though they may be armed for other purposes). However, when we look at two states' histories we may find that they warred in the past. At one time these same states may have expected or feared or waged war with each other. So the objection can be made that what we are portraying as a 'no-war security community' has existed only for a given period of time, before which its members fought one another. While that is true for some states, it does not detract from the existence of 'no-war' relationships which appear to run deep and to be relied upon. Typical pairs and groups cited as examples of 'no-war' security communities are the United States and Canada, the Nordic states, and the NATO allies.<sup>25</sup>

Nation-states which have fought in the past can establish mutual 'no-war' expectations, even though they have common borders and disagreements. How does this occur? One precondition appears to be a period of two or more generations in which they don't fight each other. War starts the clock again. A second is some sense of shared identity. It could be linguistic or ethnic identity, though neither guarantees 'no-war' expectations. The NATO allies forged a common identity around the Soviet 'foe' and the shared desire to enmesh Germany in a European framework. Third, leaders must be free from the belief they can advance the 'national interest' by warring with each other: that is, there must be an absence of perceived good reasons to war. That implies—fourth—that the states do not commit provocations against one another. Their leaderships may disagree, they may even engage in long-standing and consequential disputes, they may adopt dissimilar foreign policy postures

<sup>25</sup> Karl Deutsch et al., *International Political Communities*, above.

toward states outside the community, but among themselves they manage or resolve conflicts by pacific means. They practice mutual reassurance.

Then there comes to be an expectation, widespread and commonly shared, ‘taken for granted’, that war is not an option. Once this is established it perpetuates itself. The states forming a ‘no-war security community’ are, in that respect, as if they constituted a single polity. We know that war sometimes breaks out between parts of a single polity—‘civil war’—but for most states most of the time there is an unquestioned assumption against civil war. Civil war is unthinkable. There is neither preparation for it, nor talk about it. Civil war is excluded from discourse.

The ‘no-war security community’ is, then, a certain type of discourse community. It may be this for which Mikhail Gorbachev strove when he spoke of a “common European house.” The linguist Paul Chilton writes of Gorbachev’s metaphor that “this is a concept of domestic security not military security.”<sup>26</sup>

*Global Regimes: The Regime of Force*

International society can be understood as many concurrent systems of negotiations and practices. Some would call these systems of rules. Rules are negotiated and open, and practice includes an ongoing negotiation, both of process and of content.

Five thoroughgoing and interpenetrating regimes characterize global relations. They are:

*[i. Commerce and finance.]*

The commercial and financial regime is the most elaborated, a complex of market transactions in goods, money, and services.

*[ii. Personal mobility.]*

A related regime governs international personal mobility.

*[iii. Information.]*

A third—currently in revolution—provides for the movement of information. It is increasingly implicated in the regime of commerce and finance.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Chilton, “Safe as Houses,” in *Peace Review: The International Quarterly of World Peace*, v 1 n 2, Spring 1989, pp. 12–17, p. 16. Chilton has also remarked on the double meaning of ‘domestic’.

All three of these regimes touch and are touched by the nation-state, where they are attached to a given point in territory. For example, the state acts as a gatekeeper regulating personal mobility, through the system of visas and border points. But these are better understood as profoundly decentralized regimes, consisting of states (fewer than 200), firms (many), and users (multitudes), in which the regime is largely negotiated between firms and users.

The fourth and fifth regimes, however, are based on the state itself. That does not preclude non-state contacts, and strong overlapping with the global information regime, but the state remains the decisive actor:

*[iv. Politics.]*

political transactions, including resultant agreements and rules codified in international law, and

*[v. Force.]*

schemes of force: war and threat of war.

Only rarely, in the current world of complex relations and participatory states, is a dispute about commerce, mobility, communications or political negotiations asserted as a *casus belli*. When it is, the issue is always doubled with a dispute about who shall exercise final authority. While such issues can be resolved politically, they also engage the rules—the customary expectations and practices—which guide use of force among the states. They concern answers to the question ‘is it appropriate to use force in this case?’

We are justified in terming this a ‘*regime* of force’ because it embodies limits. It is not blind force, random force, terror. Discussions of ‘self-help’ under conditions of ‘international anarchy’ ignore the fact that there are strong, widely-held views, which inform state policy for most states most of the time, that force is inappropriate except in extraordinary circumstances. We could better understand the regime of force if we called it a ‘regime of force and restraint’.

For example, state designees have met, negotiated and committed to rules governing chlorofluorocarbon emissions, accomplishing a complex political transaction. They have not, however, fixed on means of enforcement.

Making war *disputes another’s claim under the existing regime of force*. It tries to *confirm a version of the regime of force, or replace the*

*existing regime of force with another*. This is what students of diplomacy mean by ‘upsetting the existing settlement’.

At one time border disputes and border wars were frequent, and they occasionally occur today, as in Kashmir. If a state claims territory, and another disputes it, this is a dispute about the regime of force: the right to back authority with force in that territory is exactly what is in dispute. The same is true when the assertive state asks not territory *per se*, but political submission. Civil war is dispute about ultimate internal authority. The ongoing regime of force is also what is at stake when one state becomes fearful that another is arming to attack and launches preventive war or—less drastically—hastens to build its armies.

In short, war is about the regime of force. There is a claim that it is ‘in keeping with the rules of the regime’ to threaten or employ force *in a particular manner and at some specific time and place*. Or there is a claim that the rules of the regime should be changed. One party believes that this claim, if not resisted, would alter the regime of force to its disadvantage in a manner, and to a degree, so unacceptable that resistance by force is ‘appropriate’. Whether one of them then takes the step of actually launching war is a question of political decision.

This view is reinforced by experience. The internal and international wars of this century have been about whether a state’s (or movement’s) use of force is, or is not, in keeping with ‘the rules’. Some concerned territory and authority, and others sprang from fear of attack or forced submission. WWI, WWII [Europe], WWII [Pacific], China [Civil War], Korea, Vietnam, Iran-Iraq, the Gulf, former Yugoslavia were all of one form or the other, or both, but all were about the regime of force. But these are the same wars we cited earlier to show that war almost always has *internal* origins. Now we can say that these were *generated internally as assertions about the regime of force*. In the same vein, Cold War arming was driven by fear and internal political competition, but expressed in tense tacit bargaining about the global regime of force. Civil war too concerns whether the government’s claim to an authoritative monopoly of force, the right to write the rules, is legitimate.

It does not follow that this is the only way in which the resort to war could be framed in the future. However, even imaginative anticipations of ‘information warfare’ conform to this test, since the assault on integrity of information flows will be subordinate to some larger purpose. If the worst predictions about global warming were to prove true, or if population increase led to more widespread ecological

breakdown, refusal to accept negotiated limits could be taken as cause to compel recalcitrants. What restraint and assurances would be required to prevent these powerful new issues of right policy and justice becoming causes of widespread war?

*Civil Society and the Politics of Conversation*

Throughout this work we have stressed *politics*, rather than coercion, as the practice on which the good society must rely. Ongoing conversation and negotiation, not force and posturing, build and sustain such a society. *Reciprocity* rewards good will; declining to join in otherwise attractive projects punishes abuse. *Restraint* ensures the time required to engage in politics—‘good faith’ efforts to identify differences and find means for management or settlement.

Drawing the line against force as an ‘appropriate’ action in interstate or internal affairs, leadership would practice non-provocation, reassurance, and reliance on defensive means. What more would an international society, one based on *politics* properly understood, require?

*Maintaining Conversation.* Conversation offers opportunities: to search for complementary projects, to canvass unilateral projects beforehand, to negotiate interpretations of situations which are somehow dissimilar, to caution against misleading stories, to practice mutual reassurance.

Just as individuals can act for themselves, without consulting anyone beforehand, so states may design and undertake projects unilaterally. When leaders speak of the ‘autonomy’ of the state, they mean in large part its capacity to design and undertake projects of its own, exercises of sovereignty. The state may, for example, choose to deploy nuclear weapons, or declare that it will no longer be bound by a policy of ‘no first use’. But it is just such projects which upset the expectations of other states’ leaders, who hope for stability. State leaders do not like surprises, especially those which are challenges, or which hint at challenges to come. [Of course, it is also possible for a state to take reassurance steps unilaterally.]

Much such conversation occurs, but more thoroughly among allies and friends, with whom typically a fabric of complementary projects is already in place. In a world seeking to avoid war, a premium should be placed on conversation with those whom one most suspects of designs to alter unfavorably the rules governing force. Of course, it’s what you say

that counts; and the text which April Glaspie was instructed to follow in speaking with Sadaam Hussein in July 1990 failed to elicit Sadaam's plans or to deter war. Sadaam, for his part, had no intention to 'canvass beforehand' his planned strike against Kuwait. He simply acted to assert an interpretation of the existing regime of force.

*Listening for and Considering Others' Stories.* We have argued that stories are central to the design and choice of policy. They are the source of episodic fragments, of exemplars and evitars, of organized sequences which have led to results in the past and which could be adapted into plans. State policy is drawn from stories, expressed in stories, and enacted through stories. Or so we have argued.

If this is true of 'our' state, it is also true of 'their' state. Then it is of importance, if our policy is to be aptly cast, that we appreciate the stories on which they draw, the plans they design, and measures they propose to enact. We may take many actions unilaterally, but if we do so in response to them, or even more in *anticipation* of what they may do, then we have some obligation to get that right. But Barbara Tuchman warns that "the opponent's point of view is rarely considered in the paranoia of war."<sup>27</sup>

The injunction to hear 'their' view has even greater force in common space. We create a commons through the practical work around which it is organized, but also explicitly by travel and conversation, building common institutions, and rule-making. Then the question is 'what stories do we tell?' The spate of post-Cold War peacekeeping and peacemaking attempts by the United Nations led to a need for taking accounts seriously. For example, do we say the debacle in Sierra Leone in May 2000, which saw hundreds of peacekeeping troops taken captive and breakdown of the tenuous beginnings of order, showed that peacekeeping does not work, or that in Sierra Leone it was badly done?<sup>28</sup>

An international civil society requires shared stories. Here the arts of the historian are as important as they have been in France and Germany, endeavoring to find sharable understandings of WWI and WWII. And if all NPT signers hold that 'nuclear proliferation' is a bad thing, they have two fundamentally different stories about the meaning of extant nuclear weapon programs. The NPT process, on its face, is intended to bring about a world which coincides with an agreed story.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly*, above, p. 250.

<sup>28</sup> Blaine Harden, "Rule of Force: In Africa, A Lesson in How Not to Keep the Peace." *The New York Times*, 14 May 2000.

*Maintaining an Open Society.* Mutual reassurance requires that preconditions for *passive reassurance* be in place. Members of the society must be free to speak out, foreigners free to inquire, people free to come and go, and locations and activities largely free from structures of secrecy. This openness need not be complete, since excluded locations, for example, can be subjects of special purpose reassurance moves. But if such moves are to be manageably few, the society as a whole must be open.

How to accomplish transparency? For example, against the tedious claim that commercial secrets would be imperiled by openness, provide civil relief and arbitrated compensation. Against clandestine and prohibited laboratories, rewards for disclosure. Against police state denial of the right to travel abroad, or other moves to enforce a closed society, making access to contact with foreigners by technological means easy and easily hidden. Of course, it is the essence of mutual reassurance that states volunteer transparency.

*“Inevitability”*

Kant wrote in 1795 that “it is the desire of every state (or of its ruler) to enter into a permanent state of peace by ruling if possible the entire world.”<sup>29</sup> And Thucydides, some 2200 years earlier, reconstructing the Athenian representatives’ insistence that Melos submit to Athens, had them say

right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.<sup>30</sup>

No modern inquiry into war can ignore force and greed. In the name of states and movements men seize, deny, destroy and compel by sheer acts of force. Evidence is abundant.

When the record is examined more closely, however, it reveals a curious contradiction. We speak of an ever-present *threat* of the use of force. But force is actually employed far less frequently than it might be: actual acts of seizure, denial, destruction and compulsion of one state by another are so rare that they stand out and seize headlines.

<sup>29</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Eternal Peace,” in Karl J. Friedrich ed., *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant’s Moral and Political Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1949), p. 454.

<sup>30</sup> Thucydides, p. 331.

There are three possible reasons for war's infrequency. One is that people (and states) are disinclined to use force, perhaps because its use is unseemly, or immoral, or unpopular, or costly and disruptive. A second is that they would use force if they did not fear the consequences. A third is that they do not have to use force: their strength itself frightens the weak into submission. These reasons correspond roughly to three distinct viewpoints about global politics: a liberal internationalist view, a realist view, and a view which discerns imperialism at work.

None is wholly convincing, and all may be in play. Washington and Moscow did wage war against smaller states, and Moscow made good its threats to Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Chechnya, but it is hard to argue that war served them well. War's infrequency lies in deterrence, and largely in recognition that force fails in the longer term. Most state leaderships, as they claim, maintain their armed forces for defense, not gain, and believe a brighter future best charted on terms of peace and stability. There are exceptions; and no doubt they are sometimes deterred because they know that seizure by force would be punished.

### *Rejection of War*

The schema outlined in this work identifies, as an important fact when war or provocation is proposed, that some people—who are part of the politics of considering war—reject the proposal, or doubt it, or are 'as yet' unpersuaded by it. When war is agreed upon the record often identifies dissenters, a 'peace party', vigorous opponents of war. The January 1991 proposal to authorize Bush to launch Gulf War II passed the US Senate by a vote of just 52 to 47. And when war is not agreed, as is often the case, the objectors must have carried the day.

This suggests it would be helpful, even if cases are quite distinct, to explore objection more thoroughly. What is the texture of objection? Why, in any given case, was objection not more tenacious? Did objection have a vigorous social base? Were the objectors less inventive than required by the political contest in which they found themselves? How important were the constitutional and practical institutions of decision in containing or diverting objection?

We can say, however, that objectors are stronger if they have a positive alternative. How can the society and polity sustain itself, territories and purposes intact, without resort to war? Oddly enough, war advocates often shield their proposals from criticism and close



examination, invoking patriotism or the evil enemy, shifting the burden of proof onto those who object. Objectors must resist that. They must also press their own definition of the situation, and offer credible foreign policy proposals of their own. These measures assume the task is inherently political, so there is no *a priori* assurance that it can prove successful.

*New World Order?*

The Revolutions of 1989–91 rekindled hope in a global ‘no-war security community’. A transition from the Cold War of 1945–90 to less threatening relations appeared possible then, and appears possible ten years later. It will require going far beyond 1989 and 1990, and beyond the coalition warfare of 1990–91, but in principle there is no reason why a global security community could not be achieved. This would not be George Bush’s ‘new world order’, which rested on the continuing primacy of the N5 nuclear weapon states, and the initiative and compelling force of the United States. It would not be the product of any grand design. It would grow out of bilateral acknowledgments that war was out of place, ‘inappropriate’ as a means of addressing disputes. As we observed earlier, as much as two generations may be required for a ‘no-war’ understanding to take root between any two societies, and time alone does not guarantee it.

The 1990s provide a post-Cold War baseline by which the 2000s can be measured. The map of wars looks like a map of geologic faults and depressions. Iraq, south to Kuwait, north to the Kurds. The rim of the former Soviet Union, including Armenia/Azerbaijan and Chechnya; and continuing war in Afghanistan. Former Yugoslavia. The great lakes region of Africa, and Zaire. Mozambique. Sierra Leone. Ethiopia-Eritrea. Sudan. Timor. If the greatest threat of major inter-state war lay between India and Pakistan, both chose not to initiate it. Instead, the 1990s wars are associated with states in disintegration and default. Many instance ‘ethnic conflict’, though that does not explain them.

When major states applied military force they acted with calculation and deliberation: the Coalition in the Gulf [1991], Russia in Chechnya, and NATO [1999] in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. The Gulf War and the Kosovo affair sprang from provocations by tyrants; neither Sadaam Hussein nor Slobodan Milosevic was constrained by democratic accountability.

*Iraq.* Iraq's attack on Kuwait is unambiguous; whatever the claimed justifications, none excused Iraq's choosing war and seizure.

*Kosovo.* Serbia's expulsion of Kosovars further illustrated that Serbia failed, once again, in its most basic duties to its citizens, as a declining Yugoslavia failed the Bosnians, and as Croatia also failed the Serbs in its population. None of that justifies the NATO bombing campaign of 1999. But on the principle that every people deserves a minimum of security, the breakdown of Yugoslavia required, at Vukovar in 1991, that the United Nations provide security for Yugoslav citizens in their communities. No such capability was in place, no will to provide it, and none was forthcoming, as the terrible example of Srbenica shows. (Rwanda and Burundi similarly illustrate that no one was ready to step in and provide basic security when government broke down.)

*Chechnya.* A major consequence of NATO's bombing of Serbia and pro-Serbian sites in Montenegro was that it freed Russia to assault Chechnya once again, as it had in mid-decade. This shows how one state's invoking the war script enables another to do so as well. The Chechen War in early 2000 was popular among Russians. We must understand this war as an imperial legacy and a signal warning to other Russian territories that secession is not permitted. A far-seeing government in Moscow would have solved this issue without resort to war.

None of the wars of the 1990s has its origin in international affairs. None is a 'systemic' response to 'requirements'. All stem from internal ambition and assertion. Of course, Sadaam wanted higher price for oil. Once Sadaam held Kuwait, George Bush seems to have become persuaded—on no evidence, and none ever provided—that oil was a vital issue. Certainly there would have been no Coalition if Iraq had not seized Kuwait. But if we are asking how this war could have been avoided, it is easy to see how, and that has nothing to do with international affairs or the 'structure of the state system'.

As the 1990s illustrate, there are ample internal sources of large-scale and deadly war. Moreover, the five Powers repeatedly disagreed: on Yugoslavia, on Iraq, and especially after mid-decade on the role of UNSCOM. The EU states found it difficult to arrive at an agreed policy on former Yugoslavia. North Korea, until the end of the decade, resisted efforts to draw it firmly into the non-proliferation consensus. In 1998 India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons. The obstacles to global security are profound.

The central concepts of the war script today—that global society rests on coercion not politics, arms provide security, and nuclear weapons are the ultimate guarantor—pervade the language and thought of modern societies. They are embodied in social institutions, political practice and distended militaries. Their themes are cheaply reproduced and disseminated by press, radio and television. Political figures who are unwilling to be ‘tough’ are vulnerable to exclusion from influence on public life, in Russia and China as much as in the United States. Paradoxically, it has become difficult to discuss the war question without granting the terms of the war script itself.

In this work we have sought to show that the world of global politics and war can be represented in a quite different way. We began by breaking from the quest for ‘results’ demonstrable through ‘empirical inquiry’. That does not mean that we are disconnected from the world of experience, but that we do not expect to find ‘ruleful generalizations’ there. Instead, we began with stories by which the world is understood, the unceasing activity of men and women as interpreters, keening with intent, and their negotiation with one another about what they see and what should be done.

*What should be done.* How do we get from interpretations of the past to plans for the future? We argued that both are stories. Plans like accounts of the past are episodic. Their content is in part borrowed from and adapted from experience and stories, and is in part imaginative combination and invention.

We then connected this to institutional politics and the state. After all, states (and movements) make war. We made this connection through two moves. We argued, first, that views about important questions tend to coalesce around Readings, often just two or three contrary Readings. Then we said, second, that government commits to texts when it makes ‘authoritative decisions’ on plans which have been brought to the table. Typically, plans on the table embody a Reading, and variations or contraries.

In the view developed here, war is *chosen*. We believe any other understanding falsifies the freedom of political leadership to withhold resort to arms. Then leadership is *responsible* and *accountable*.

On our argument, then, we can address both interstate and internal disputes by political means. Privileging *politics* as the means by which a society accountably and with participation conducts public affairs, we privilege *politics* as the means by which the state’s agents conduct global

affairs. This view celebrates politics, a realm of argument and reasoned claims, without any assumption that its results are conclusive. On the contrary, we see all results—interpretations, negotiated judgments, Readings, political decisions—as open and contestable.

In that vein we make no claim that this text has *proven* an alternative to understandings which assume the war script. We argue only that we have shown a way to discuss politics and war avoidance which assumes instead a civic script, and adopts politics, not coercion, as its means.

As we share the same world with ‘realists’ and economic liberals, it does not surprise us that many of our understandings and proposals have long circulated. We acknowledge a role for deterrence, for example. We differ from ‘realist’ or ‘neo-realist’ positions in the ways deterrence is best achieved, for neither strategy we recommend—defensive defense and collective security—favors the offensively-armed state.

Consider a *non-provocation community*, a way-station toward a *no-war security community*. Consider weapon denuclearization as a merely practical aim, attainable in the short term. Consider what it means to exercise *restraint* in the use of armed force. Consider the distinction between force applied collectively, after global deliberation, and force applied unilaterally or by a self-chosen band. It is this fabric of policy, taken together, which the civic script recommends.

Each resort to force contributes to the theme of force in society, and to the availability of a discourse of force. Substituting a discourse of politics for that of force, nurturing talk in place of threat, *delegitimizing provocative and near-provocative acts*, provides a test of people and policies. We appreciate the perceived utility of force. It is attractive to those who can invoke it; neither force nor threat will be banished by wishful thinking. After all, we began with the observation that it is easy to destroy and difficult to build.

## 12 Conclusion

The belief that we make the social world has important implications for our choice of action, but we should also bear in mind what it does *not* imply. It does not mean the world we get is necessarily ‘good’. Nor does it justify a relativist position in which every outcome—any outcome—is ‘as good as any other’. In fact, to believe the social world is a ‘made world’ is also to believe that it must be *negotiated*, and therefore that it must *include* negotiated practices of interpretation, critique, decision, and negotiation itself.

Accepting that the social universe is open and constructed does not guarantee any one of us, or any group of us, the world we would have. We cannot simply have whatever world we wish. First, there are constraints, of nature and history. Second, others may oppose us. Third, we may prove unable to bring together the people and means required. But we still have enormous freedom: we can have whatever world—of worlds possible given historical legacies and material constraints—we can persuade others to accept and accommodate.

Does that mean we can have a world without war? I believe so, but not without imagination and an ongoing politics. The concluding words of Michael Howard’s *War and the Liberal Conscience* are *à propos*:

Kant was right when he said that a state of peace had to be ‘established’. What perhaps even he did not discern was that this is a task which has to be tackled afresh every day of our lives; and that no formula, no organisation and no political or social revolution can ever free mankind from this inexorable duty.<sup>1</sup>

Do the views developed in this text offer insight into the ‘establishment’ of peace? I believe they do, in several ways. First, they shift the discussion from the barren desert-lands of ‘war causes’. Instead,

<sup>1</sup> Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 135.

they call for work on *how* wars are chosen. Second, they resist all claims that any given war is ‘inevitable’ and instead show an aware, authoritative choice to war, from which it follows that war is *avoidable*. Third, if war must be the object of authoritative decision, and is sometimes not undertaken, then the *occasion* and the *content of arguments which are made* are fruitful subjects of inquiry. Fourth, the argument is developed here, though certainly not ‘proven’, that what puts war questions on the agenda and renders war choice ‘appropriate’ are largely *internal, domestic considerations*, which we must understand as cultural sources. (Of course, unprovoked attacks and provocations are external sources of war; but the point is that their sources too are internal.)

Fifth, we have developed and sustained a focus on ‘stories’—understood as accounts of the past, of putative enemies and friends, and in the form of plans as organized proposals for the future. Several insights into war avoidance and the maintenance of a ‘no-war community’ follow from this emphasis on story. We take as especially important those stories which embed, consolidate, and recapitulate fear of attack or oppression; and so put special weight on steps—such as ‘anyplace anytime’ inspection and cooperative measures of transparency—which can best give the lie to such stories when they are baseless. Finally, our special interest in *intentions* and *plans* leads to the argument that war avoidance must be *designed* and *practiced*. It is a *political practice*, one which centers on an ongoing negotiation with other parties to bring about, in the practical world, measures of *mutual reassurance*.

#### *Practice: Enacting a Civic Script*

The twentieth century was—whatever else—a century of armament and war. From 1914 states sought security in their autonomous capacity to make war. If the twenty-first century is to be different, understanding must turn on a different story of the relationship between force and security. That story must circulate widely, and be widely enough credited to be self-enacting. Radically different policies would follow.

In the late twentieth century, despite the end of the Cold War and a growing appreciation that war could not win leaderships what they sought, the war script was still dominant. This was so because it was embedded in a matrix of self-reinforcement.

Preparation for war was mapped onto others' weaknesses and inherent vulnerabilities. *Appearing to intend to exploit others' vulnerabilities recurrently recirculates the war script*. This is the classic 'security dilemma'. Responses and—worse—anticipations lead to arms racing, distrust, and tenser readiness for war.

Second, the war script feeds itself by encouraging scripts of resistance and opportunism. Was NATO the paramount achievement of a collective-security system? A contrary view argues that NATO was an alliance accommodating and exploiting US hegemony. NATO enabled Europe to avoid once again (as it had in the inter-war period) meeting its own political and security needs. In this view, encouraging US military predominance provoked scripts of resistance—first in the Soviet Union, and then in states such as Iraq and Iran—and created a vacuum for the use of force by those who, because effective collective security was never prepared, were undeterred: Sadaam Hussein against Kuwait, Tudjman and Milosevic et al. against peoples in former Yugoslavia, for example. Believing this, one may also—without contradiction—believe that the US role was widely welcomed, and undertaken in a spirit of good will.

Relying on *hegemonic enforcement* is a third self-reinforcing mechanism. Reagan's expedition to Grenada, the Coalition of 1990–91 in the Gulf, Russia in Chechnya, and NATO in the 1999 Kosovo campaign vividly exemplify hegemony at war. The hegemonic alternative shuts out collective security, for several reasons: it justifies self-help, bypasses the politics of governing collective security, encourages 'outsiders' to go it alone, and raises suspicion of the interests and aims of the enforcers.

Fourth, the war script actively, and by neglect, resists cultivating and considering alternatives outside the war script itself. When alternatives are impoverished and their circulation discouraged, when among officials they are systematically unsupported or even excluded, when they are dismissed as 'naive' and 'unrealistic', only the war script gains.

#### *Summarizing*

The account of war choice developed in this work proceeds by answering a series of questions. The summary which follows refers to choosing war by states. Organized movements—as distinguished from loosely connected bands—come to war in much the same way. And most of these comments apply as well to other significant central war decisions, such as allying and developing new weapons.

- How do states go to war?

By choice, recorded in a formal decision.

- Why is the decision for war, rather than not to war—at least, not to do so at that time?

Because there is a proposal on the table to go to war, and the resistance and objection which is understood to block a proposal on such an occasion has fallen away.

- Is there a single reason why the proposal is unblocked?

Not necessarily. A catalytic event—Pearl Harbor—can sweep resistance away. But only *individuals* abandon objection, so there may be as many reasons as there are participants in the decision.

- Are there advocates of war?

Yes. There must be some support for the proposal, though it need please no one. But advocates must judge war ‘an appropriate measure at this time, given the circumstances we face’.

- Why is the proposal on the table, in the first place?

Because leadership and staff charged with preparing an agenda has judged war an appropriate option ‘given the circumstances we face’.

- What is it that makes war an option?

The existence of Readings which associate ‘the circumstances we face’ with *war scripts* and *war stories* in which war is represented as ‘an appropriate measure in circumstances like this’.

So four steps fuse. First, individuals offer interpretive and selective accounts of ‘the situation’, an episode in which they say there are incompatible claims. Second, the belief that there is a dispute, that it characterizes an episode in relations between the state and another, circulates and forms a recognizable Reading. Third, the episode is associated with—or distinguished from—‘similar’ episodes and categories of episodes, in some of which war is credited as appropriate; and there is something unusual at stake, something at



risk or something to gain. Fourth, some people call for war as part of the response to ‘the circumstances we face’. So there come into circulation Readings in which the defined situation and proposals for action are tightly joined. In a dispute sufficiently serious to have widespread attention, many such Readings are spawned, and a few will become widely-held and recognizable. This is not a neat or orderly sequence, but instead a fusion, in which steps are repeated and prompted by prior steps, in no special order.

- Is that true only for decision-makers? government agencies? or in civil society?

It is the case throughout, subject to people’s access to reports of ‘the situation’ and their attention to the episode once it is declared. There may be more bureaucratic system to the statement and presentation of the issue in government, but the basic pattern holds in both government and civil society.

- What about ‘gut responses’? Pearl Harbor? The *Maine*?

Exactly. There is a powerful general script of *retaliation* and *revenge*, which goes back to ‘an eye for an eye’. This prompts war advocates to cry “Remember the Alamo!” or “Remember Pearl Harbor!” And in the case of the *Maine*, civil society, inflamed by the press, forced war on a reluctant president.<sup>2</sup> Invoking war scripts and war stories can follow from anger and fear as easily as from some more cerebral operation.

Having been attacked or provoked puts government on the spot. Failure to respond risks dismissal, or calumny. And time matters. A prompt retort is different from a considered, later response.

- Isn’t it circular to argue that leaders choose war because they think it is ‘appropriate’? Surely what we want to know is why they think *war* is appropriate, rather than something else.

The argument is that there are two steps: first, being puzzled by the problem ‘what to do?’, and second, drawing on stories which ‘fit

<sup>2</sup> The *Maine* blew up because of unsafe design, not sabotage, according to the most persuasive current accounts.

well enough' and charter war. Where are these stories? In memory, in language, in shared history and culture, in responses to catalytic acts, and in the ongoing elaboration of plans within government.

So it is not circular at all. It argues that *some* scripts and stories become models because those who form options, or decide, see a congruence between the situation in the script or story and 'the situation we face'.

- But why is a person guided by one story rather than another?

We don't know. The question of *motive* is deeply puzzling. We will always speculate on people's motives. Although we may draft a plausible reconstruction of the sources of a person's preferences and dispositions, in the end *why* they follow one model rather than another cannot be established. Even when people say they act for a given reason, we can never be quite sure what that means, for we have no sure way to confirm what they say.

- Are there other ways to account for a choice?

Yes. Some options are rejected. They are judged 'inappropriate' for that time, in those circumstances; or at least 'less appropriate' than some alternative on the table. Again, this does not enable us to break through to a person's entire basis for choice. But people may assert, and it may be important to their peers that they do so, that a given option is 'inappropriate'. If in the course of decision the net effect of participants' preliminary objections is to remove some choices from the table, the actual choice will be confined to those which are left. Since there is reason to believe that choices made by an ongoing group tend to fall on those options which incite the least vivid opposition, the path finally followed may rise to the top by default. The decision task is not to find the best outcome, or the one with the greatest affirmative support, but one which is not *disqualified* by its great cost or risk or danger, or the otherwise inexplicable dispositions of key figures in leadership. War options are often disqualified, part of the reason war is so rare.

- How can societies break the pattern of self-reinforcing war stories? What is the crux of the six-point policy proposal developed in the last chapter? How can this approach be most concisely summarized?

The schema proposed is to cultivate complementary convictions that (i) war is an ‘inappropriate’ means, (ii) disputes can be resolved without war, and (iii) violations of the war taboo will be met with firmness but restraint. These convictions require supporting institutions and practices, for example means of collective security, and ongoing renewal of the regime of war avoidance as effective, accountable, and just. The heart of the proposal, therefore, is an unending politics centered on the civic script.

- Does that mean ‘world government’?

No. But it does require accountable practices, widely regarded as open and just, to avoid disputes, resolve disputes, deter war, and bar gains from war.

### *Guiding Research*

This work develops an ‘approach’ to the war question. Adherents to standard theory claim that their programs provide reasons for research choices. Does the approach of *War Stories* identify problems or raise questions which, in a different but analogous way, point to fruitful research programs? Does it provide a means to discriminate between ‘more important’ and ‘less important’ questions? In this section we will introduce several ways in which our approach could signal a salient research question.

*Illustrating How Stories Carry Claims.* War scripts and war stories invite analysis pointing out the claims embedded in them. The types of claims we have identified—of things, causes, and categories—are carried inside stories. Just as significant are corresponding possibilities which are overlooked or excluded. For example, reference to “the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade”<sup>3</sup> diverts attention from the fact, even according to the official US account, that the proposal to bomb, all mistakes alleged, and the actual delivery of the bombs by a mission from Missouri to Belgrade were exclusively in the hands of US officials and military, no one else. What are the implications for accountability to term this a “NATO bombing”? Did NATO conduct an independent review? How *could* an ‘independent review’ be conducted within NATO, given

<sup>3</sup> Jane Perlez, *The New York Times*, 22 June 2000.

sovereignty claims? So there are two distinct lines of research suggested by this example: one focuses on the use of text, and the other on the implications of an existence claim.

*Exploring 'Cause' and the 'Graininess' of Accounts.* A standard problem for historians is to decide how particular their account must be to capture what matters for the story they wish to tell. It is something like the resolution or 'graininess' of a photograph. If it is enough to capture the shapes of the trees, then low resolution will do; but if the point is to read words on a sign, a high resolution photograph may be needed. War theory formed of ruleful regularities about cases judged 'adequately similar' exploits low resolution: it depends on big shapes, not details of the cases. Since the approach of *War Stories* argues that what is interesting lies in the *particularities* of cases, it points clearly to research projects which compare the persuasiveness of grainy as against refined accounts. The question is: how much detail did we have to know of this case to reach conclusions unlikely to be modified by knowing more? And at that level of detail, is this case still 'adequately similar' to others with which it was compared in more grainy treatments?

*Assessing the Claim of 'Internal Sources'.* One recurrent implication of the approach of *War Stories* is that wars—and therefore problems of war avoidance—are fundamentally *internal* problems, sited inside states, in their internal political and social life. An obvious research question, therefore, is to explore whether examination of cases confirms, or disconfirms, that expectation.

*How do Readings Form, Change, and Circulate?* *War Stories* offers an image of 'views held in common' termed Readings, and those who hold them as Readers; it is plausible on its face, because of the way it is defined. But it should be possible to trace a Reading empirically. It would not be possible to reconstruct every transaction, but some parts of the field of transactions could be explored. For example, existing methods of media analysis applied to texts of news broadcasts and newspapers on a given subject would provide an account of one-directional communications. Interviewing Readers, asking how they had come to their view, whether they were influenced by hearing or seeing reports, whether they had spoken with friends about the subject, and how their views had changed, would make it possible to compose illustrative

sketches. The object, again, is not ruleful regularities purporting to show the ‘behavior’ of human subjects, but accounts which would suggest, for the limited group interviewed, how they had managed views on the subject.

*Exploring Decision Processes.* Similarly, do further inquiries confirm, or in some respects disconfirm, the report of decision processes in *War Stories*? What *War Stories* brings is a call to identify *war scripts* and *war stories* in the backdrop of actual decisions. Ingenuity would be required to avoid coloring the evidence to fit what was sought. This study has relied on the abundant anecdotal evidence: again and again voluntary accounts of war decisions, ignorant of our special interest in the question, invoke scripts and stories. The limitations of anecdotal evidence, however, are obvious. So this is a research problem for further work.

*Designing Mutual Reassurance Measures.* A distinctive consequence of *War Stories*’ privileging stories is the argument that some dangerous misbeliefs can be prevented by *active reassurance measures*. The aim is much more than ‘confidence building’ or ‘encouraging trust’. It is therefore a design problem to identify salient misbeliefs and conceive corresponding reassurance measures. Rather than imagining that this is a general task, we imagine it is a large set of complex *particular* tasks, because matching the reassurance measures to actual fears and suspicions should require as many designs as there are configurations requiring reassurance. Still, with growing experience it will be possible to identify common features, and common expectations about practices of active mutual reassurance, which should promote collaboration in design. After all, the party requiring reassurance knows best what evidence would accomplish that.

*Political Adoption, Maintenance, Adjustment, and Engagement.* Having said that building a ‘no-war security community’ on a global scale poses ongoing political demands, it is a compelling and difficult research task to explore paths to simultaneous adoption and to all that would then be required to sustain such a community. This is the broader design problem of which designing mutual reassurance measures is one small part. If the sources of support for, and resistance to, a ‘global no-war security community’ are *internal* to states—in keeping with our general argument stressing internal sources of policy—then the political contexts will be as

numerous as the number of participating states. Just as the European Union has become a subject of study, leading to academic programs and think tanks at work in EU member states, and ‘globalisation’ has become an academic and government topic, so a ‘no-war security community’ implies focused, sustained inquiry supported by new and existing research capabilities. To the extent these were carried on in keeping with the approach of *War Stories*, they would stress the importance of empirically-based design and well-negotiated accounts.

### *Final Word*

Throughout the text we have stressed two themes: that building is hard, and that society and polity are built, constructed in meaning and substance, through negotiation. The good state ensures its people security, welfare, respect, and justice. A ‘no-war security community’ is not merely a security device, but a broader context enabling the benefits of good governance. Nothing in *War Stories* supports an expectation of closure, either of method or substance. In its place we put *fictions required by the need to talk*, *fictions required by the need to act*, and the momentary magic of authoritative decision. What exactly these are, in a given time and place, resides in the interplay between unilateral and negotiated measures, among those enacting that episode, and therefore cannot be specified ‘in general’. Differences in capacities, in resources, in status—in power, as some students of politics put it—certainly affect bargains between unequal parties, but how that effect registers itself is also subject to their negotiation. So our world is one of ongoing negotiation and improvisation, not a world fixed by power or ‘realist’ theory. We appreciate the widespread currency of war stories. But they do not carry the only possibility, as revulsion against war, the infrequency of war, and the existence of empirical security communities show. Elimination of nuclear weapons and construction of a ‘global no-war security community’ are not assured. They are possible. In the ways that matter most our futures are amenable to a politics of design and negotiation, which by this account is carried on through the exchange and interpretation of stories. Every action embodies the selection, interpretation, and negotiation of stories, and never more evidently so than when the past is said to preclude futures we propose to build. A more textured and pragmatic politics will therefore take up the challenges of design and negotiation.

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