

Introduction: Interstate and Civil Strife

Not too long a time has passed since publication of the *Handbook of War Studies II*, yet much has happened in that period. The prevalence of civil war, the mass killing, even genocide, of noncombatants, and other forms of brutality not typically associated with interstate war have increasingly occupied the attention of researchers. At the same time, interstate war, especially between major powers, now appears to be too costly a venture for the vast majority of states. Even superpowers such as the United States have hesitated to enter that arena, except on a limited basis, as exemplified by the Gulf War of 1991. The United States did undertake the invasion of another sovereign entity in 2003—its entry into Iraq—but it was civil strife of the most intense variety that ultimately forced sectors of the United States government and society to recognize the high cost and limited benefit, if any, of this policy. Thus, much of this volume is devoted to an examination of the systematic study of civil strife and its sometime correlate, genocide. Although infrequent, genocide can yield many times the number of dead resulting from most interstate or civil conflicts. It is therefore deserving of our attention.

Because interstate war is still with us, albeit less frequently, it is examined along with civil strife in Part I of this volume. Analyses of the onset and termination of civil wars are found in Part II. The book concludes with an examination of ethnic conflict, international relations, and genocide in Part III.

The main reason for publishing this volume is found in the increasing reluctance of developed states to engage in interstate war, a development first seriously examined by John Mueller in the post–World War II period, and the simultaneous emergence of the largely unexpected civil conflicts of various sorts. Although around the turn of the twentieth century, earlier observers had predicted the end of interstate warfare and in midcentury were roundly castigated for their naïveté, the current state of the international system suggests that these commentators were simply

premature in their judgments. There are many sources of this newer reluctance to wage war among developed states. Among them are the increased antiwar sentiments in the aftermath of World War I that World War II magnified enormously, the emphasis on economic well-being that precludes the onset of highly destructive wars, and the existence of international structures such as the European Union that explicitly prohibit warfare among their constituent units. One can also add the democratic peace that virtually eliminates the possibility of war between democracies, and the emergence of a fundamental though embryonic ethic prohibiting the large-scale killing of human beings in the name of political goals.

In Part I, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita reviews one of the most prominent analytic approaches to understanding the origins of war—rational choice. As we shall see in later chapters, rational choice can help us understand the origins of civil strife as well. Beginning with the basics of rational choice as a starting point for constructing theory, Bueno de Mesquita principally examines the game-theoretic literature and rational choice behavior against the backdrop of domestic politics. Challenging the more venerable claims that either a balance of power or a serious imbalance of power leads to war, Bueno de Mesquita finds greater explanatory power in his game-theoretic approach. Neorealist theories also are found wanting. Ultimately, he settles on a selectorate theory of politics in which audience costs are paramount. The vaunted theory of the democratic peace then becomes one in which the audience costs of making war are far higher in democracies than in autocracies. The selectorates for each are different.

The chapter on emotions and war by Rose McDermott provides a very different perspective on issues of war and peace. Included here is a presentation of theories that go beyond interstate and civil war, even to the perpetration of genocide. McDermott reviews prospect theory at length, as a theory of cognition that provides an alternative to the conventional uses of expected utility theory examined in the preceding chapter. Because of the asymmetry between gains and losses, a central prediction of prospect theory is that people within the domain of losses are risk acceptant in their decision making, while those in the domain of gains are risk averse. These predictions are important for understanding the onset of genocide, among other violent phenomena. McDermott also finds that prospect theory is importantly linked to theories of the emotions, and reviews theories that take as their starting point emotion instead of cogni-

tion. Although many of these perspectives are oriented to voting behavior, especially in the United States, others can help us understand international crises, such as that of Suez in 1956. The relationship between fear and war is another area usefully examined by theories of the emotions.

Part II turns to the onset and termination of civil wars. In his chapter, T. David Mason details the evolution of theory on civil war and revolution. Carefully distinguishing among civil wars and other forms of conflict that can occur within the state, such as genocide or politicide, Mason reviews the existing theories. Among them are models of the deprived actor and rational actor, as well as theories based on resource mobilization. State-centric models also receive a fair share of attention. Mason concludes his chapter with empirical studies that systematically test these models and theoretical orientations. The availability of data is, of course, a problem in any such empirical investigation. GDP per capita emerges as the most significant negative correlate of the onset of civil war. Some support exists for the proposition that ethnic division affects the probability of civil war, while evidence for the potentially important relationship between democracy and civil war is mixed. This latter relationship is taken up in more detail in the subsequent chapter, by Nils Petter Gleditsch, Håvard Hegre, and Håvard Strand.

The state also occupies a significant position in Mark Lichbach's review of bargaining theory in contentious politics. Timing of state formation is, of course, important, if only because of the consequent variability in genuine independence of the newer sovereign entities. This condition, in turn, can affect the applicability of theoretical approaches. Lichbach reviews in detail the dynamics of contention and sequential bargaining theories of war. Game theory is the principal mode of presentation in the latter instance. For that reason, the discovery of stable Nash equilibria is a major purpose of Lichbach's analysis. A principal substantive finding is that incomplete information, mutual uncertainty, and erroneous expectations are significantly more important as causes of civil war than are the traditional emphases on the anarchy inherent in the security dilemma. Social contracts among contending parties and stable institutions as equilibria are important implications of Lichbach's analysis, as are changes in equilibria as harbingers of regime change.

Because of the salience of the democratic peace in the international relations literature and its implications for peaceful relations between groups within democracies, the nature of the association, if any, between democracy and civil war is a topic eminently worthy of attention. In the

chapter by Gleditsch, Hegre, and Strand, the relationship between the two variables is carefully examined empirically. These authors find some support for an inverse U-curve relationship between democracy and the onset of civil war, and more substantial support for a lower magnitude of civil-war-related violence when it occurs in democracies. However, if one uses a different measure of democracy than the widely used Polity IV measure, the U-curve finding is not replicated. As implied in the chapter by Mason, when the GDP per capita variable is introduced, the impact of democracy on civil war declines. The authors also present other interesting and provocative findings. As a careful empirical examination of an important area of inquiry, this chapter is an exemplary contribution.

Last, but not least in this examination of civil wars is the matter of their termination. Here, as in preceding chapters, the author, Roy Licklider, carefully examines the issues and findings. Defining terms is important, especially the meaning of the “ending” of civil wars. The role of external actors is often crucial, for they frequently are the only agencies with significant force capability (or the threat of its usage) to direct the warring parties to the negotiations table. Of course, not all civil wars end in negotiations hosted by external parties. Military victories ending the war clearly in favor of one party to the conflict, or the “hurting stalemate” that can lead both protagonists to seek a negotiated settlement, also can end civil wars. Licklider examines the prevalence of these modes of ending civil conflict. Outcomes of settlements have included partition, and the institution of democracy, with each solution presenting its own unique difficulties. Licklider wisely discusses not only the empirical issues of the success or failure of the several alternative possible outcomes in rendering a stable peace, but also the ethical issues associated with each.

Part III deals explicitly with ethnic conflict, its origins, the impact of international relations, and the occasional but nevertheless important degeneration of ethnic conflict into genocide. Monica Duffy Toft reviews this literature with careful attention to both theory and dimensions of international relations. One of her most important findings is that concentration of a single ethnicity in a homeland dominated by a stronger power—for example Chechnya within the Russian Federation—greatly increases the probability of ethnic war. Toft also critically evaluates the four theoretical strands she identifies in the systematic literature. These are the security dilemma, the culpability of elites, collapsed or flawed political institutions, and material-based (economic development and distribution) theories. She finds positive and negative elements in each, but

in the end advocates a syncretic approach that, for example, unites issues of wealth, identity, and fear as necessary pieces of the puzzle of why ethnic violence persists. It is clear that future studies need to pay close attention to this recommendation.

Stephen Saideman and Erin Jenne explicitly investigate the association between international relations and ethnic conflict. A natural point of departure for their analysis is the contagion and diffusion of conflict that has a relatively long history in the literature. Diasporas too are important as external sources of ethnic conflict. The authors rightly mention the role of Irish Americans in the recent “troubles” in Northern Ireland. Yet the impact of this Irish Diaspora is deeper still, for it originated largely from the Irish famine of the mid-nineteenth century and mass emigration to the United States. Thereafter, until the twentieth century, the organization of Irish nationalism against Britain (and the consequent ethnic conflict within Ireland) took place mainly on U.S. soil. Saideman and Jenne explore irredentism and cross-border violence as sources of ethnic conflict. They conclude their chapter with recommendations for future research on the internal dynamics of ethnic organizations, the differentiation among various consequences of external interventions, and the distinction, if any, between ethnic conflict and civil war.

Because of the absence of agreement among scholars on whether such a distinction exists, I have tended to use the term *civil strife* to denote a more generic category that subsumes both civil war and ethnic conflict. Yet this is only a semantic solution to a more fundamental problem. The correlates of both civil war and ethnic conflict need to be examined carefully to see if the domains of explanation differ substantially between the two cases. On the other hand, areas of overlap actually may be found that could intimate the robust nature of certain variables in explaining civil strife as a generic category.

Finally, my own chapter is concerned with the explanation of genocide and the policy recommendations that follow. Although initially I had not intended this outcome, much of the chapter is devoted to a comparison between large-*N* and small-*N* approaches to the study of genocide, especially regarding the suitability of each in generating policy-relevant conclusions. As it turns out, the findings of both types of investigation can be relevant to policy; it simply depends on how the studies are organized. The large-*N* studies require a specific comparison among alternative policies. Because of the inherent need for process tracing in determining causality in small-*N* studies, they can somewhat more readily yield pol-

icy-relevant findings, but only if the theory is precisely examined by means of clearly stipulated real-world operational measures. Territorial loss is one such measure of a diminished authority space that requires sensitivity by policymakers in other countries in dealing with the actor who loses. The potential uncompensated territorial losses by Sudan in the south of the country resulting from governmental defeats in ethnic strife and consequent international agreements, in part generated the Darfur genocidal crisis in the west. In pushing for the 2004 settlement likely leading to independence only of the Christian and animist south, and thoroughly ignoring Darfur, the U.S. government opened the door to ethnic cleansing and genocidal behavior in Darfur in an effort by the Khartoum government to at least retain that territory.

One can even understand the desire of larger states to avoid such territorial losses in the future by tolerating ethnic strife in a contested territory, and not agreeing to its secession. Indian policies in Kashmir are driven at least in part by its desire to avoid any future secessions from its federated system by disallowing that possibility in Kashmir. Without the force capability available to states such as India, and in the absence of international agreements that would firmly and effectively guarantee compensation for Sudan in the event of independence of the south, the ethnic cleansing, even genocide, in Darfur persists.

This third in the series *Handbook of War Studies* has once again responded to international events that have driven the research interests of scholars in the field. As we know, despite the decreased prevalence of interstate war, it is still extraordinarily difficult to predict the future of interstate and civil conflict in the midst of technological revolutions that can place the weapons of mass destruction in the hands of leaders of the smallest states, even of terrorist groups. Only time will tell if this and other eventualities will lead the discipline of international relations to rival economics as the “dismal science.” Yet if like the economists and other empirically oriented social scientists we persist in the effort to disclose the often hidden relationships among variables and those with policy relevance, then we may be able to avoid being saddled with that dubious distinction.