

## WHY ISN'T THERE MORE VIOLENCE?

JOHN MUELLER

**B**ENJAMIN VALENTINO'S masterful book, *Final Solutions*, explores the process by which governments during the twentieth century managed deliberately to kill masses of people. Most of the lessons that emerge from this examination are unsettling. In particular, we learn that mass killing is not all that difficult to carry out.

To begin with, it appears that perpetrating regimes need mainly to set up the killing machinery and organize it with reasonable bureaucratic effectiveness. They do not need to force the executioners to carry out their grim duty nor do they need to propagandize to instill and sustain in the executioners great amounts of hatred or anger toward the victims. For the most part the horrors are carried out in a mechanical process.

Second, the number of people required to perpetrate a mass killing does not need to be large. Over and over again, Valentino finds that the killing machinery was manned by relatively small numbers of people. This means that regimes sometimes need to recruit little more than small bands of sadists or criminals to carry out the task, though there is considerable evidence that, if properly organized and disciplined, ordinary men can also do the killing—or “dirty work,” as they may label it.

Third, there is often a great deal of passive acceptance by the general population of systematic destruction of human life being carried out by their government in their name. It is not so much that people approve of the horrors, but that they don't do much of anything to stop them and are inclined instead to look away, sometimes with regret, but effectively with what Valentino calls “negative support.”<sup>1</sup>

John Mueller is Woody Hayer Chair of National Security Studies and professor of Political Science at Ohio State University.

1. Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 32. Valentino does not deal very much with the notion of sanctions as a form of intentional mass killing (though see p. 88). His point about “negative support,” however, is illustrated by the lack of reaction in the United States when America's ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, appeared on the nation's most popular television newsmagazine, *60 Minutes*, on 12 May 1996. Asked whether she thought the deaths of perhaps half a million children caused by U.S.-imposed sanctions on Iraq were “worth it,” she replied without disputing the number, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it.” This remarkable assertion, ignored in the United States, became

Fourth, the victims of mass killing rarely put up much in the way of direct resistance. Confused and unorganized, they generally submit to the killing machinery, allowing themselves to be herded and brutalized. The most common kind of “resistance” is to attempt to flee. Sometimes some of those who have been successful in fleeing to safer territory can then organize themselves into an armed resistance force, but this activity little affects the killers in the first instance.

Fifth, though less stressed by Valentino, the perpetrators of mass killing generally suffer little punishment for their acts—sometimes, though certainly not always, this is because the activities have been embedded in wars or in military campaigns. Of course, Adolf Hitler and a number of other top Nazis did not survive the Second World War to meet their fate at the postwar Nuremberg trials, and some sort of punishment may yet be meted out to at least a few of those who perpetrated atrocities in Bosnia or genocide in Rwanda. Yet postwar trials have been mainly a matter of victors’ justice, and they take years of effort, are notoriously inconsistent concerning who is arrested and brought to trial, and for the most part are, not unreasonably, biased toward punishing the top leadership, not the vast majority of the perpetrators, who are generally left free to blend back into society. Moreover, most of the leaders of the mass killings examined by Valentino—including Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, Turkish leaders in 1915, and counterinsurgents in Afghanistan and Guatemala—died of natural causes.

I would like to extrapolate somewhat from this experience and examine a related question: If violence is so easy to carry out, why isn’t there more of it? Despite the horrors detailed by Valentino and those that crowd the headlines daily (not to mention the intuitions of pessimistic visionaries such as Thomas Hobbes), the vast majority of people during the vast majority of their lifetimes never experience much of any violence at all—though they may watch a lot of it on television and at the movies.

#### RATES OF VIOLENCE

**T**O CONSTRUCT the argument, it would be useful at the outset to estimate how much violence there is in the world and to establish a benchmark for determining whether the amount of violence should be considered to be large or small.

---

famous in the Arab world. See Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 263.

DEATH BY WAR, GOVERNMENT, AND AUTOMOBILE

Valentino begins his book by attempting to put his project in broadest context by estimating how many people during the bloody twentieth century died violent deaths in wars and through the systematic use of mass killing by governments. Like others, he concludes that the latter—something Rudolph Rummel has aptly labeled “death by government”—was responsible for a considerably greater amount of death than was the former. Overall, if everything is put together, an estimate—probably somewhat on the high side—of the total number of people who died during the century from wars (both civil and international) and from governmental mass killing would come out to be perhaps 200,000,000.<sup>2</sup> Since around 12,000,000,000 people populated the planet at some time during the century, this would mean that somewhere between 1 and 2 percent of the century’s population died from war and mass killing.

It is possible, of course, to regard these violent death rates to be high—1 or 2 percent may sound low, but that adds up to a very large number of deaths overall. A degree of context and something of a benchmark might be established, however, by comparing death rates from automobile accidents. Americans at present drive around in cars designed for safety and very commonly on expensive high-speed highways on which head-to-head crashes and dangerous maneuvers such as left turns are made nearly impossible. Still, an American’s chance of dying in an automobile accident over a lifetime is, as it happens, somewhere between 1 and 2 percent.<sup>3</sup> Yet it seems fair to conclude that, judging by their behavior, few Americans consider the chances of dying in an auto crash to be unacceptably high or even worthy of much consideration or consternation, even though the private passenger automobile has been the necessary cause of three million deaths in the United States alone over the course of the twentieth century and, at present rates, will result in four million during the twenty-first.<sup>4</sup>

Of course these rates are only very general ones. War has not been uniformly distributed—one could have mostly avoided it by living in Europe during the last half of the twentieth century or in quite a few other places during the first half. Moreover, certain groups were marked for mass killing and proportionately suffered far more from it: Turkish Armenians, Ukrainian

2. Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 1–2. See also Rudolph Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994).

3. David Ropeik and George Gray, *Risk* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 424.

4. The World Health Organization estimates that road crashes currently kill 1.2 million people a year worldwide. See [www.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2004/pr24/en](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2004/pr24/en) (accessed 28 April 2004).

kulaks, European Jews, Rwandan Tutsis, noncommunist Cambodians. Auto accidents, however, are not evenly distributed either. The chances of dying in one are notably lower for those who wear seat belts; who do not drive recklessly or after midnight; who do not drive when drunk, drugged, or very tired; who are not male; and who are not nineteen years old.

The key point is that the chances that a randomly selected inhabitant of the twentieth century would die of war or mass killing (something understandably considered tragic and unacceptable) are about the same as the chances that a randomly selected modern American will perish in an automobile accident (a risk considered regrettable, but acceptable). Putting together these two disparate facts, it could be held that, in an important sense, violent death by war or government is remarkably—or perhaps even acceptably—infrequent.

#### HOMICIDE

Also relevant would be a consideration of homicide rates. Although there are a few cases in which frequencies are even higher, the most murderous societies in all of history have had yearly homicide rates of around 100 in 100,000—that is, ones in which an individual has about one chance in a thousand per year of being murdered. The vast majority of societies have sustained lower rates: in the United States, it is more like one in 10,000; in Japan and Canada, more like one in a 100,000. Over a lifetime, an individual in the United States has far less than one chance in a hundred of being murdered, and even in history's most murderous societies that risk rises only to one in twenty. Indeed, crime in total could be considered to be a remarkably uncommon phenomenon. Only a small percentage of the population in most societies becomes a victim of even minor forms of crime in any given year, and violent crime constitutes only a small portion of that.

The chances of becoming a victim of homicide or other crime can, of course, be reduced by living in certain areas, avoiding or getting out of abusive relationships, and remaining distant from the drug trade. Overall, however, it remains rare, even in societies that are considered notably—or at any rate, comparatively—dangerous.

#### TERRORIST VIOLENCE

Of interest as well is the frequency and effectiveness of another much-discussed form of mayhem: terrorism. Filmmaker Michael Moore happened to remark on the popular CBS news program *60 Minutes* on 16 February 2003 that “the chances of any of us dying in a terrorist incident is very, very,

very small.” His interviewer, Bob Simon, promptly admonished, “But no one sees the world like that.” Both statements, remarkably, are true—the first only a bit more so than the second.

For all the attention it evokes, terrorism, in reasonable context, actually causes rather little damage, and the likelihood that any individual will become a victim in most places is microscopic. The number of people worldwide who die as a result of international terrorism is generally only a few hundred a year—tiny compared to the numbers who die in most civil wars or from automobile accidents. In fact, until 2001, far fewer Americans had been killed in any grouping of years by all forms of international terrorism than were killed by lightning. Furthermore, except in 2001, virtually none of these terrorist deaths occurred within the United States itself.

Even with the September 11 attacks included in the count, however, the number of Americans killed by international terrorism since the late 1960s (which is when the State Department began tracking this data) is about the same as the number killed over the same period by lightning—or by accident-causing deer or by severe allergic reaction to peanuts. In almost all years the total number of people worldwide who die at the hands of international terrorists is not much more than the number who drown in bathtubs in the United States.

Some of this is definitional. When terrorism becomes really extensive, it is generally no longer called “terrorism,” but “war.” Yet what people are mainly concerned about is random terror, not sustained warfare. Moreover, even using an expansive definition of terrorism and including domestic terrorism in the mix, it is likely that far fewer people were killed by terrorists in the entire world over the last hundred years than died in any of a number of unnoticed civil wars during that period.<sup>5</sup>

5. The fear of violence, thus, is often much greater than its actuality, and the record with respect to fear about crime suggests that efforts to deal coherently with the risks of terrorism will prove difficult. For example, fear of crime rose notably in the mid-1990s even as statistics were showing that crime was in pronounced decline. When David Dinkins, running for re-election as mayor of New York City, pointed to such numbers, he was accused by A. M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* of hiding behind “trivializing statistics” that “are supposed to convince us that crime is going down” (“New York to Clinton,” *New York Times*, 1 October 1993, A31). New Yorkers did eventually come to feel safer from crime, but this was probably less because crime rates actually declined than because atmospherics as graffiti, panhandlers, aggressive windshield washers, and the homeless were banished or hidden from view. In the end, it is not clear how one can deal with the public’s often irrational fears about remote dangers. Some people say they prefer dangerous forms of transportation such as the private passenger automobile to safe ones such as commercial airliners because they feel they have more “control.” Yet they seem to feel no fear on buses and trains even without having that sense of control and even though derailling a speeding train or crashing a speeding bus are likely to be much easier for a terrorist than downing an airliner—as experience in Israel attests. Furthermore, people tend to be more

Obviously, this could change if international terrorists are able to assemble sufficient weaponry or devise new tactics to kill masses of people and if they come to do so routinely—and this, of course, is the central fear. It should be kept in mind, however, that 9/11 was an extreme event—until that date, no more than 329 people had ever been killed in a single terrorist attack (in a 1985 Air India explosion)—and extreme events often remain exactly that: aberrations, rather than harbingers.<sup>6</sup>

For present purposes, however, the question is this: If terrorism has such a major public impact and evokes such widespread fear, why isn't there more of it? Since 9/11, the United States has been inundated by imaginative speculations about where and how terrorists might strike next. The most spectacular of these stress the exotic: nuclear, chemical, biological, or radiological weapons, all of which take considerable technological sophistication. By contrast, the 9/11 strikes were remarkably low-tech and could have happened long ago: both skyscrapers and airplanes have been around for a century. Given the vastness and apparent vulnerability of the country and the seeming dedication of terrorists and some of their would-be imitators, one would expect there to be a massive number of terrorist attacks following the popular "what's to stop" speculations: what's to stop terrorists from shooting at people in shopping centers, collapsing tunnels, poisoning food, cutting electrical lines, derauling trains, setting forest fires, blowing up oil pipelines, causing massive traffic jams, et al.? Yet, mostly, it does not happen.

#### RESTRAINTS ON VIOLENCE

IT IS UNLIKELY that the rates of terrorism and of homicide and other crimes are as low as they are because of the remarkable efficiency and effectiveness of the police, criminal justice, and internal security systems. Only a few percent of crimes result in conviction and the perpetrators of the vast majority of terrorist attacks are never found—a consideration that is, of course, irrelevant

---

alarmed by dramatic fatalities—which the 9/11 crashes certainly provided—than by ones that cumulate statistically. Thus the 3,000 deaths of 9/11 inspire far more grief and fear than the 150,000 deaths from auto accidents that have taken place since then. In some respects, fear of terror may be something like playing the lottery except in reverse: the chances of winning the lottery or of dying from terrorism may be microscopic, but for monumental events that are, or seem, random, one can irreverently conclude that one's chances are just as good, or as bad, as those of anyone else. The communication of risk, then, is no easy task.

6. On this issue, see John Mueller, "Harbinger or Aberration? A 9/11 Provocation," *National Interest* (fall 2002): 45–50. More generally, see John Mueller, "Simplicity and Spook: Terrorism and the Dynamics of Threat Exaggeration," *International Security Perspectives*, forthcoming.

in the case of suicidal ones. Serial killers characteristically murder a considerable number of people before they are caught, and that usually comes about only because they have established predictable patterns or made key mistakes; if they quit after only a few murders, like Jack the Ripper or the anthrax poisoner of 2001 did, they are unlikely to be apprehended. Other forms of social control may add to the rather limited and inefficient ones presented by the police and security systems. Among these are restraints raised by religious and social proscriptions.

It seems to me, though, that the most reliable restraints on violent behavior—both by individuals and by states—stem from human nature. For the most part, following the Rodney King prescription, we all—or almost all—actually do really want just to get along. There certainly is a quota of jerks out there, but most people most of the time are inclined to avoid conflict—certainly violent conflict. Their key goal is to live in peace and security, and they do this in part by adopting a live-and-let-live philosophy and by sharpening their skills from a very early age for determining whom to trust and befriend.<sup>7</sup> By and large, their instincts predispose them not to belligerence or aggressiveness or even to stand and fight, but rather to flee conflict by removing themselves from threatening situations and moving from neighborhoods that are, or seem, dangerous. What is remarkable about most societies is how small in number, indeed how little in evidence, are the police forces required to maintain acceptable order.

#### THE HOBBSIAN IMAGE

If this is true, it suggests that Hobbes and the Hobbesian perspective on human nature were and are substantially flawed. People in general are not given, or readily driven to, violence or aggression but rather are, for the most part, fairly easy to govern. Indeed, they will tolerate quite a bit of persecution and unpleasantness for a little peace and order. For example, in discussing the dominance that the Canadian government imposed on the often warlike Indians of western Canada, Lawrence Keeley noted that the restraint they exercised “as they were subjugated and dispossessed is evidence of how much injustice people will tolerate for the sake of peace if they are assured of receiving

7. See Robert C. Ellickson, *Order without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Lawrence H. Keeley, *War before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 178; John Mueller, *Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on Recent Transformation of World Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), ch. 8; and John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 38–43.

the means to survive, certain punishment for breaking the peace, and impartial protection of their persons and property if they keep it.”<sup>8</sup>

Experience thus suggests that Hobbes—or at least the common Hobbesian image—is wrong, and perhaps profoundly so, in some important respects about the state of nature.<sup>9</sup> Hobbes was obsessed by the chaos and calamity of the English Civil War of 1642–49, which took place during his lifetime, and his important book, *Leviathan*, was, he noted, “occasioned by the disorders of the present time.”<sup>10</sup> In particular, he viewed the conflict as a descent into a base state of nature, a “kingdom of darkness” and a “confederacy of deceivers” in which “force and fraud” become “the two cardinal virtues,” and where without “a common power to keep them all in awe,” people live in a perpetual state of war “where every man is enemy of every man,” where there is “continual fear and danger of violent death,” and where life, as he famously put it, becomes “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>11</sup> Hobbes did acknowledge that people group themselves (so the state of nature may not be quite as “solitary” as his famous description seems to suggest), and thus that the perpetual wars of the state of nature are waged between bands rather than between individuals.<sup>12</sup> The implication of the image, however, at least as it is commonly understood, is one of perpetual and total violence in which all, or virtually all, partake.<sup>13</sup>

8. Keeley, *War before Civilization*, 155. People are also strongly inclined to seek governments that seem to be able to provide that sense of safety, even ones that are reprehensible on other grounds. The power of this appeal should never be underestimated. It is fundamental, and people will in desperation often sacrifice almost anything simply to be able to live in peace. Thus, the Taliban succeeded in Afghanistan, despite their theological extremism, in large part because the population was desperate for a force that could bring order to the country. The Nazis came to power in Germany in considerable part because they seemed likely to be able to deal effectively with the political disorder that was endemic in German streets at the time. People in Turkmenistan willingly support a leader who renames months after himself in part because he appears to have kept them from the violent disorder that has infected nearby Tajikistan. Despite the authoritarian cast of his government, Russia’s Vladimir Putin remains highly popular in considerable measure because of the perceived stability that has marked his reign—in vivid contrast with the turmoil of the 1990s.

9. This discussion draws upon John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 112–16.

10. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 496 (in “Review and Conclusion”). Actually, however, Hobbes had already worked out some of the notions in writings, such as *De Civi*, that were published before the Civil War.

11. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76–78 (in ch. 13).

12. Robert P. Kraynak, *History and Modernity in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 148–49.

13. This conclusion may be more Hobbesian than Hobbes, however. Russell Hardin pointed to a passage in which Hobbes noted that “law was brought into the world for nothing else but to limit the natural liberty of particular men, in such manner, as they might not hurt, but assist one another, and join together against a common enemy.” *Leviathan*, 175 (in chap. 26). The suggestion is that the problem is with “particular men,” not with the totality of humanity.



Yet the experience of much civil warfare, mass killing, terrorism, and criminal predation calls this image into question. Although the conditions of deep insecurity certainly resemble a Hobbesian state of nature, they come about not because people generally fall into, are manipulated into, or give in to, murderous enmity, but because they are plagued by small numbers of unpoliced criminals or because they unwillingly come under the control of groups, often remarkably small ones, of organized or semi-organized murderers.

As Valentino's discussion suggests, societies can be devastated by the violent maraudings and intimidations of a handful of people. In Bosnia, the much-feared thugs of Arkan's Tigers consisted of a core of some 200 men, and perhaps totaled 500–1,000 overall.<sup>14</sup> Višegrad, a Bosnian city of 50,000, was substantially controlled for years by a returned hometown boy, Milan Luki, and some fifteen well-armed companions.<sup>15</sup> The town of Teslic was controlled, it is estimated, by "five or six men, well placed and willing to use violence."<sup>16</sup> Naser Ori, the Muslim warlord who ruled Srebrenica for several years (and who was mysteriously absent with his gang when Serbian forces overran the town in 1995), led an armed band with a nucleus of only fifteen men.<sup>17</sup>

The condition seems quite general, perhaps even universal. For example, during the Dutch Revolt in the middle of the sixteenth century, noted Geoffrey Parker, small numbers of Calvinists were able to topple Catholic authority in many areas, smashing churches and wayside shrines often "in full view of great crowds who watched and lifted not a finger." In the south of the country, the destruction was carried out by a band of between 50 and 100 people—including returned exiles, unemployed manual workers, drunkards, whores, and boys in their early teens—who were hired by the day at the wage of an unskilled laborer.<sup>18</sup> More recently, the forces that ended up shattering Liberia numbered 150 or less at the beginning,<sup>19</sup> and those in Guatemala began with less than 500.<sup>20</sup> According to a priest who lives there, a slum in Kingston,

14. Miloš Vasi, "The Yugoslav Army and the Post-Yugoslav Armies," in *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth*, ed. David A. Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda (London: Longman, 1996), 134; and United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, ed. M. Cherif Bassiouni (New York: United Nations, 28 December 1994), para. 92, 138.

15. Chris Hedges, "From One Serbian Militia Chief, A Trail of Plunder and Slaughter," *New York Times*, 25 March 1996, A1.

16. Mike O'Connor, "Moderate Bosnian Serbs Plot in Secrecy for Unity," *New York Times*, 31 July 1996, A3.

17. David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), xiv, 60, 107–9, 354, 355.

18. Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 78–79.

19. William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 79.

20. Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 206.

Jamaica, populated by 8,000 people is totally dominated by 30 mobsters.<sup>21</sup> In Somalia, warlord Mohammed Aidid ran his fiefdom with a few dozen hired guns paid in part with drugs.<sup>22</sup> The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is undoubtedly the event that most evokes the Hobbesian neighbor-against-neighbor image in the post-cold war era. Yet the disaster there was perpetrated by perhaps 2 percent of the Hutu male population over the age of thirteen.<sup>23</sup>

Since Hobbes assumed that every person is, at base, “radically insecure, mistrustful of other men and afraid for his life,” he concluded that the only way out of the mess is for everyone permanently to surrender to an authoritarian ruler, one who primarily values glory and stability rather than doctrinal orthodoxy or ideological (or ethnic) purity, and one who will maintain the necessary force to keep people from once again giving in to their natural proclivities for isolation, hostility, and insensitivity to the rights of others.<sup>24</sup>

Experience suggests, however, that this monumental—perhaps even impossible—task is hardly required. As noted, most people most of the time do not have a great deal of difficulty getting along and in fabricating useful rules and patterns of conduct that allow them peacefully to coexist. Police may indeed be needed, even necessary, to maintain order, but they need not normally be numerous nor must their control be Leviathan-like. This is because they mainly need simply to protect the many from the few, rather than everyone from everyone else, as Hobbes—or at least the Hobbesian image—would appear to have it. That is, the policing forces have to deal not with a broad population, but with only a small, violent segment.

At one extreme, the Hobbesian image can lead authorities to reach the essentially racist conclusion that the only effective method for eliminating a threat that emanates from a definable group is to annihilate the group itself. This simple, if horrendous, conclusion has been, as Valentino has demonstrated, a major reason for huge population transfers and for mass killing.<sup>25</sup> At the other extreme, the image can discourage policing by suggesting that the costs would be enormous because one must control directly and completely the entire group, rather than just a small, opportunistic, and often quite cowardly subgroup.

21. *60 Minutes*, CBS, 14 May 2000.

22. Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 109, 368.

23. Mueller, *Remnants of War*, 100; Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 37; and Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 38–41.

24. Kraynak, *History and Modernity*, 165, 176, 179.

25. Valentino, *Final Solutions*, chs. 4, 5.

## INTERNATIONAL "ANARCHY"

Insofar as the realist perspective in international relations takes its cast from a Hobbesian perspective, it may be substantially, even viscerally, in error. Specifically, the notion that countries live in a state of "anarchy" is misleading and could encourage undesirable policy developments.

Technically, of course, the word is accurate: there exists no international government that effectively polices the behavior of the nations of the world. It is, as Kenneth Waltz put it, a condition of "self help."<sup>26</sup> The problem with the word "anarchy" lies in its inescapable connotations: it implies chaos, lawlessness, disorder, confusion, and random violence. It would be equally accurate to characterize the international situation as "unregulated," a word with connotations that are far different, and perhaps far more helpful.<sup>27</sup>

Waltz argued that "interdependent states whose relations remain unregulated must experience conflict and will occasionally fall into violence," or "with many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire—conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur."<sup>28</sup> Realist John Mearsheimer argues further that, in a condition of anarchy, "there is little room for trust among states" and "security will often be scarce."<sup>29</sup>

As suggested above, violence in domestic situations is quite rare, and it seems that this condition primarily derives not from the Leviathan-like capacities of the policing system but rather from human nature, which overwhelmingly tends to eschew violence. People do need protection, but it is not protection from everyone else as Hobbes would have it, but simply from the violent few. Something similar may apply to international society.

Most important in this regard is that in our "anarchic" international system, major wars—wars among developed countries—have become so rare and unlikely that they could well be considered to be obsolescent, if not obsolete. Michael Howard in 1991 found it "quite possible that war in the sense of major, organised armed conflict between highly developed societies may not recur."<sup>30</sup> Two years later, John Keegan concluded in *A History of Warfare* that

26. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 111.

27. On this issue, see also Mueller, *Quiet Cataclysm*, ch. 2.

28. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 138, 159.

29. John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (summer 1990): 12, 45. See also Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Technology, Strategy, and the Uses of Force," in *The Use of Force*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 3–6.

30. Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 176.

the kind of war he was principally considering could well be in terminal demise: “War, it seems to me, after a lifetime of reading about the subject, mingling with men of war, visiting the sites of war and observing its effects, may well be ceasing to commend itself to human beings as a desirable or productive, let alone rational, means of reconciling their discontents.”<sup>31</sup> By the end of the century, Mary Kaldor was suggesting that “the barbarity of war between states may have become a thing of the past,” and by the beginning of the new one, Robert Jervis had concluded that war among the leading states “will not occur in the future” or, in the words of Jeffrey Record, may have “disappeared altogether.”<sup>32</sup> In the history of warfare, the most interesting statistic is zero (or near-zero): the number of wars between developed states since 1945.

Not only have developed countries managed to stay out of war with each other, but there has been something of a decline of international wars of any sort since the Second World War. The only truly notable exception between 1975 and the end of the cold war in 1989 (and it is an important one) was the bloody war between Iran and Iraq that lasted from 1980 to 1988. In addition, aside from armed interventions in civil wars in neighboring countries and a few border skirmishes and conflicts, there were regime-changing invasions of Uganda in 1978–79 and of tiny Grenada in 1983, and a brief armed dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina in 1982 over some remote and nearly barren islands in the South Atlantic. Moreover, it is probably significant that, although armed contests between the Israeli government and Palestinian rebels have remained plentiful, no Arab or Muslim country has been willing since 1973 to escalate the contest to international war by sending its troops to participate directly. After the cold war, there were a number of what might be called “policing wars”—militarized efforts by developed countries to bring order to civil conflicts or to topple thuggish regimes—that reached something of a culminating (and perhaps ending) point with the invasion of Iraq in 2003.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the only really classic sort of international war that has occurred anywhere in the world after 1989 was the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the late 1990s.

Thus, international war has declined remarkably since 1945 even while international anarchy continues, effectively, to flourish: no one, surely, would

31. John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 59.

32. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 5; Robert Jervis, “Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (March 2002), 1; and Jeffrey Record, “Collapsed Countries, Casualty Dread, and the New American Way of War,” *Parameters* (summer 2002): 6. See also John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

33. On this phenomenon, see Mueller, *Remnants of War*, chs. 7–8.

confuse the United Nations or other international bodies with a Hobbesian Leviathan.

Experience suggests, then, that alarm about international “anarchy” is much overstressed. Regulation is not normally required, and “anarchy” could become a desirable state.