This Just In: War Has Almost Ceased to Exist

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ABSTRACT: War, in both its international and civil varieties, seems to be declining notably in frequency. This paper speculates about what that remarkable development, should it definitely and definitively materialize, says about the various remedies and nostrums that political scientists and other scholars and analysts have prescribed over the last century to deal with the problem of war. Most of these, it appears, have been irrelevant to the process.

Ninety-five years ago, the eminent British historian, G. P. Gooch, concluded a book by elegaically declaring that "We can now look forward with something like confidence to the time when war between civilized nations will be considered as antiquated as the duel, and when peacemakers shall be called the children of God" (1911, 248-49). And in the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Sir Thomas Barclay concluded the article on "Peace" by observing that "in no distant future, life among nations" would be characterized by "law, order and peace among men" (1911, 16).[1]

During the intervening century the world has, of course, experienced a very large amount of often hugely destructive warfare, and God, far from blessing peacemakers, appears mostly to have decided to fight "on both sides in that encouraging way He has," as A. A. Milne put it bitterly in the interval separating the two largest of those armed conflicts (1935, 222). Indeed, some writers have dubbed the period "the century of warfare," and a very large portion of the international relations and political science literature has been focused on the causes and consequences of war, seen most notably perhaps in the monumental A Study of War (1942) published at the depths of the most devastating war in history by Quincy Wright.

It may be time to revisit the visions and optimism of a century ago and to assess the massive intervening literature on war because we may be reaching a point, as Figure 1 suggests, where war--in both its international and civil varieties--ceases, or nearly ceases, to exist, a remarkable development that

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[1] As Geoffrey Blainey points out, the article on "Peace" in the next edition of Encyclopedia "was a long essay on how the victors punished the vanquished at the Peace Conference of 1919" (1973, 24).

has attracted scarcely any notice. Indeed, within a very few years there may be no war at all anywhere in the world, quite possibly for the first time in the history of the human race.

This paper, then, speculates about what that remarkable development, should it definitely and definitively materialize, says about the various remedies and nostrums that political scientists and other scholars and analysts--both pessimists and optimists--have prescribed over the last century to deal with the problem of war. Most of these, it appears, have been irrelevant to the process.

Definitions

War is very commonly defined in the social science literature as an armed conflict between governments (in the case of international wars), or between a government and an at least somewhat organized domestic armed group (for civil wars), in which at least 1000 people are killed, or killed yearly, as a direct consequence, or a fairly direct one (caught in the crossfire), of the fighting.

The 1000 battle-death threshold, as proposed by David Singer and Melvin Small in their seminal The Wages of War 1816-1965 of 1972, was presumably established to restrict the consideration to armed conflicts that inflicted what probably seemed to be a significant, if still rather low, amount of mayhem. After all, most of the literature on war deals with very substantial conflicts like the World Wars or like the American Civil War or like the Korean or Franco-Prussian Wars in which organized combatants have at each other, and it is surely wars like these that were of primary, even exclusive, concern to Gooch, Barclay, Milne, and Wright. In such context, a 1000-battle death threshold could be considered to be very low, even minimalist. Indeed, the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982 between Britain and Argentina, in which about 1000 battle deaths were inflicted, has gone down in history almost as something of a comic opera exercise because of its comparatively low casualties.[2]

If an armed conflict inflicts fewer than 1000 battle and battle-related deaths in a year, there has been a tendency to call it exactly that: an armed conflict, not war.[3] Other terms that might sometimes apply would be terrorism, coordinated riots, a high crime rate, brutal policing, or criminal predation. There are also armed conflicts, particularly civil ones, in which combatants rarely actually fight each other, but instead primarily prey on the civilian population. Although comparatively few battle or battle-related deaths may be inflicted, considerably more--often vastly more--than 1000 civilian deaths may result. In these cases, it seems sensible to use words other than "war" to characterize what is going on--perhaps ethnic cleansing, genocide, mass killing, terrorism, or extensive criminal predation.

Since the definition generally captures what I think has traditionally been meant by "war" in the vast majority of the vast literature on the subject, I will apply it in this paper. But it should be noted that other definitions are certainly possible. For example, some analysts have focused on, and tallied, armed conflicts that inflict as few as 25 battle deaths yearly (for example, Gleditsch et al. 2002; Harbom and

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[2] The desolate, nearly-barren territory was populated by less that 2000 souls, and an Argentine writer has characterized the conflict as "two bald men fighting over a comb" (quoted in Norpoth 1987, 957). However, the costs of the 10-week war, proportionate to the value of the stakes, could be considered to make the war one of the most brutal in history. Moreover, in the aftermath of that war, the British felt it necessary to send over a protective force larger than the civilian population, and the combined cost of the war and of the post-war defensive build up through the 1980s alone came to over $3 million for every liberated Falklander (Freedman 1988, 116). "Far from proving that aggression does not pay," observed one American official, "Britain has only proved that resisting it can be ridiculously expensive" (Hastings and Jenkins 1983, 339).

[3] As, for example, in Gleditsch et al. 2002, Harbom and Wallenstein 2005. The highly useful database for these studies at http://www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php

Wallenstein 2005). Others, rather than simply focusing on the frequency of wars, have applied a measure of destructiveness, weighing costly wars more heavily than ones less costly (Marshall and Gurr 2005). And still others have tallied warfare without using casualty estimates in their definitions at all (Gantzel and Schwinghammer 2000; see also Luard 1986, 7). Other data sets, particularly ones developed over the last twenty years have focused entirely on civil wars applying various definitions about casualties and about the wars' beginning and ending dates.[4] However, no matter how defined, the basic patterns for warfare--and in particular for the remarkable decline in recent years that is the central area of concern in this article--are found in all these data sets.[5]

Trends

Applying my preferred definition, one obtains the frequencies shown in Figure 1 for the post-World War II period.

International war

As can be seen, international wars during the period have been quite infrequent. Moreover, the data arrayed this way mask what I consider the most significant number in the history of warfare: zero (or near-zero). This is the number of wars that have taken place between developed states--or "civilized nations" as Gooch would have it--since 1945. Shattering centuries of bloody practice, the developed countries of Europe (once the world's most warlike continent) and elsewhere have substantially abandoned war as a method for dealing with their disagreements. Indeed, according to blogger Brad de Long, to find a longer period during which the Rhine river has remained uncrossed by an army with hostile intent, one would have to go back to the second century B.C., before the Cimbi and the Teutones appeared to challenge the armies of the consul Gaius Marius in the Rhone Valley.

Thus, a standard, indeed classic, variety of war--major war, or war among developed countries--has become so rare and unlikely that they could well be considered to be obsolescent, if not obsolete. Reflecting on this phenomenon, military and diplomatic historian Michael Howard mused in 1991 that it had become "quite possible that war in the sense of major, organised armed conflict between highly developed societies may not recur, and that a stable framework for international order will become firmly established." Two years later, the military historian and analyst, John Keegan, concluded in his <u>A History of Warfare</u> that 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." 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."[6]

The figure does not give detail about the character of international wars. However, of those waged since the end of the Cold War in 1989, the era of principal concern in this paper, there was only

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[4] See Fearon and Laitin 2003, Sambanis 2004.

[5] For specific commentary on this, see Marshall and Gurr 2005, Mack 2005.

[6] Howard 1991, 176. Keegan 1993, 59. Kaldor 1999, 5. Jervis 2002, 1. Record 2002, 6. See also Luard 1986; Mandelbaum 2002; Johnson 1995; Mack 2002, 523. For my take on this phenomenon, see Mueller 1989; Mueller 1995, ch. 9; Mueller 2004. For a contrary view: Huntington 1989.

one that fits cleanly into the classic model in which two countries have it out over some issue of mutual dispute, in this case territory: the almost unnoticed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea that transpired between 1997 and 1999.

Also tallied as international wars in the figure for the post-Cold War period are the localized Indian-Pakistan flare-up over Kashmir in 1999 and some aspects of the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia that sometimes took on what the coders thought were sufficiently international aspects.

Finally, the count includes a few "policing wars" in the post-Cold War era, comprised of militarized efforts by developed countries designed to bring order to civil conflicts or to deal with thuggish regimes. These include the Gulf War of 1990-91, the Kosovo conflict of 1999, and the current war in Iraq. However, this type of war seems likely in the future to become even less frequent. Developed countries, despite their general consensus on how the post-Cold War world should be ordered, are unlikely systematically to carry out such actions for several reasons. These include a severe aversion to casualties, a fundamental lack of interest, an aversion to long-term policing, the lack of political gain from success, a deeply-held bias against war and aggression, and the misguided, but convenient, assumption that civil conflicts stem from immutable and inexplicable ethnic hatreds that cannot be remedied by well-intentioned outsiders. The record of such international policing ventures has been mixed, but the messy results of the most notable and recent of these--America's war (or debacle) in Iraq--suggest that they are unlikely to become common.[7]

Imperial and colonial war and the demise of conquest

Throughout the last two centuries there have been a large number of wars resulting from the efforts of imperial countries to gain, and then to maintain, their hold on distant, or sometimes attached, colonial territories. Indeed, fully 199 of the 244 wars Evan Luard identifies as having taken place between 1789 and 1917 were wars of colonization or decolonization (1986, 52, 60). Another analysis enumerates 149 colonial and imperial wars waged between 1816 and 1992 (Ravlo et al. 2001). One of the great, if often undernoted, changes during the Cold War was the final demise of the whole idea of empire--previously one of the great epoch-defining constants in human history.[8] Colonialism's demise has meant, of course, an end to its attendant wars--though some may be led to suggest that the American venture in Iraq could be considered to be one such.

Indeed, there has been a most remarkable demise in the whole idea of conquest. Building on efforts conducted after World War I, the peace-makers of 1945 declared international boundaries essentially to be sacrosanct--that is, unalterable by the use or threat of military force--no matter how illogical or unjust some of them might seem to interested parties. And the peoples residing in the chunks of territory contained within them would be expected to establish governments which, no matter how disgusting or reprehensible, would then be dutifully admitted to a special club of "sovereign" states known as the United Nations. Efforts to change international frontiers by force or the threat of force were pejoratively labeled "aggression" and sternly declared to be unacceptable.

Remarkably, this process has, for various reasons and for the most part, worked. Although many international borders were in dispute, although there remained vast colonial empires in which certain countries possessed certain other countries or proto-countries, and although some of the largest states quickly became increasingly enmeshed in a profound ideological and military rivalry known as the Cold War, the prohibition against territorial aggression has been astoundingly successful. In the decades since

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[7] For a discussion, see Mueller 2004, chs. 7-8; Mueller 2005; Mueller forthcoming.

[8] See Crawford 2002; Ray 1989, 431-32; Keeley 1996, 166-67; Mueller forthcoming.

1945, there have been many cases in which countries split through internal armed rebellion (including anti-colonial wars). Reversing the experience and patterns of all recorded history, however, there have been scarcely any alterations of international boundaries through force. Indeed, the only time one United Nations member tried to conquer another to incorporate it into its own territory was when Iraq "anachronistically" (to apply Michael Howard's characterization) invaded Kuwait in 1990, an act that inspired almost total condemnation in the world, and one that was reversed in 1991 by military force.[9]

Civil war

As the figure vividly demonstrates, by far the most common type of war since World War II has been civil war. However, this kind of war, no matter how frequent, has attracted far less attention in the literature on war than has the international variety. Most have taken place in the poorest countries of the world, and many have been labeled "new war," "ethnic conflict," or, most grandly, "clashes of civilizations." But, in fact, most, though not all, are more nearly opportunistic predation waged by packs--often remarkably small ones--of criminals, bandits, and thugs engaging in armed conflict either as mercenaries under hire to desperate governments or as independent or semi-independent warlord or brigand bands (Mueller 2004, ch. 6).

The existence and the increasing prevalence of civil war up until the early 1990s can be attributed to several factors. With the decolonization of the late 1950s and 1960s, a group of poorly-governed societies came into being, and many found themselves having to deal with civil warfare. Moreover, as many of these civil conflicts become criminal enterprises, they tended to become longer and to accumulate in number. This pattern may have been embellished by another phenomenon: democratization which often is accompanied by a period in which governments become weak.[10] Then, in the aftermath of the Cold War in the early 1990s there was a further increase in the number of incompetent governments as weak, confused, ill-directed, and sometimes criminal governments emerged in many of the post-Communist countries replacing comparatively competent police states. In addition, with the end of the Cold War, the developed countries, including former colonialist France, no longer had nearly as much interest in financially propping up some third world governments and in helping them police themselves--an effect particularly noticeable in Africa.[11]

In recent years, however, many of these wars--or competitive criminal enterprises--have exhausted themselves, and new ones have failed to arise to take their place. A large number of countries managed to get through the rough period and had achieved a degree of stability--especially in Latin America, post-Communist Europe, and east and southeast Asia--and relatively effective governments had emerged in most of them. Moreover, lingering ideological civil wars inspired or exacerbated by the Cold

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[9] Howard 2000, 92. For a discussion of the process and a detailed enumeration of territorial changes since 1945, see Zacher 2001. See also van Creveld 1999, 28-29; Gray 2004, 59; Kaldor 1999, 5. It should not be concluded that an international norm against conflict *caused* this process, however. The norm and its associated institutional structure stress peace, but they are not so much the cause of the desire for peace as its result. That is, the norm was specifically fabricated and developed because war averse countries, noting that disputes over territory had been a major cause of international war in the past, were seeking to enforce and enshrine the norm. Its existence did not cause them to be war averse, but rather the reverse.

[10] On the connection between democratization and weak government, see also Collier 2000, 98, 108; Hegre et al. 2001; Snyder 2000; Jones 2001, 164-65; Marshall and Gurr 2005, 17-20.

[11] Berkeley 1997, 5. Reno 1998, ch. 2. Shearer 1998, 27-29. Keen 1998, 23. Ellis 1999, 306-7. Gray 2004, 215-17. Bates 2001, ch. 5. Wrong 2001, 200.

War contest died out (or became transmogrified into criminal ones) with its demise.[12]

But the demise is unlikely to have come about because ethnic, nationalist, civilizational, or religious tensions have diminished--these remain quite pronounced in many areas. Rather the key seems to have been in the rise of competent governments which have increasingly been able to police domestic conflicts rather than exacerbating them as frequently happened in the past.

That is, governmental effectiveness, not ethnic tension or other more cosmic concerns, is the key to the existence of much contemporary civil warfare. It follows that the fabrication of capable government is ultimately the most promising method for the long term control, and even potentially for the eradication, of most of the remnants of war. There is some suggestive, but by no means conclusive, evidence that governments are becoming generally more effective even in the poorest areas of the world, and thus that criminal warfare (and criminal regimes) may, like international warfare, be in terminal decline. Some argue that peacekeeping efforts by international organizations have often proved effective at keeping the wars from reigniting (Mack 2005, Fortna 2005).

The present condition

No matter how defined, then, there has been a most notable decline in the frequency of wars over the last several years.

Between 2002 and 2004, only one war, America's conflict in (or attempted conquest of) Iraq, has really shattered the 1000 battle or battle-related death threshold. There has also been a very costly conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan, but most of the extensive human suffering has resulted from ethnic cleansing carried out by bands of government-approved marauders, not by anything that resembles combat (Staus 2005). Beyond that, violent flareups have exceeded the yearly battle death threshold during the period in Kashmir, Nepal, Colombia, Burundi, Nepal, Liberia, Chechnya, and Uganda. Almost all of these have just barely done so. Indeed, if the threshold were raised to a not unreasonable 2000, just about the only war of any kind that has taken place since 2001 anywhere in the world would be the one in Iraq.

Several of these intermittent armed conflicts could potentially rise above the violence threshold in the future, though most of these seem to be declining in violence. Ethiopia and Eritrea continue to glare at each other, and Nepal could erupt at any time. And, of course, new wars could emerge in other places: concerns about China and the Taiwan issue are certainly justified. Moreover, there has been intercommunal violence in countries like Nigeria that often seems to resemble warfare, but is removed from consideration by the definitional requirement that something labeled a "war" must have at least a government on one side. In addition, one could apply definitions of war with lower battle death thresholds, and this, of course, would push the number higher. But, however defined, war has, at least for the time being, become a remarkably rare phenomenon.

Explanations

If the process continues--and is it obviously much too early to be certain about this--war will recede from the human experience. And that would be, of course, one of the most monumental developments in the history of the human race. As yet, however, the phenomenon has excited remarkably little comment or even notice. The syndicated newspaper columnist, Gwynne Dyer, has noted the process.[13] In 2004, the United Nations promulgated a press release, "10 stories the world should hear more about," and one of these was called "The Peacekeeping Paradox" in which it was observed that

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[12] See also Mack 2005.

[13] www.gwynnedyer.com

many civil wars had of late ended, providing many hopeful opportunities for international peacekeeping.[14] The story was picked up by PBS' NewsHour and by Business Week, but that was about all. Gregg Easterbrook published a cover piece, "The End of War?" in the May 30, 2005 issue of The New Republic that attracted a very small amount of media attention.[15]

Within the political science community, perhaps the most prominent notice of the phenomenon (or potential phenomenon) has been registered by Robert Jervis in his Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association (2002) and in a subsequent book (2005a, see also 2005b). Among scholars who have been leaders in assessing and measuring war and conflict, Monty Marshall and Ted Gurr have produced an extensive discussion (2005), while Canadian political scientist Andrew Mack has done so in a report (2005) that prominently makes use of data sets produced by Norwegian and Swedish researchers.[16]

It would seem that the process should have excited more comment. Should war really prove to be in terminal demise, this would suggest that quite of few revered notions about the causes of--and antidotes to--war ought to be reexamined. And, although still speculative, it is perhaps not too soon to suggest that, if war is really receding, many of the explanations for war so extensively promulgated and discussed over the last century may come to be found wanting.

Biology and psychology

As Kenneth Waltz points out (1959), one set of explanations for war has stressed that they arise from the essential nature of the human creature. "I'm not so naïve or simplistic," proclaimed former secretary of defense Robert S. McNamara recently, "to believe we can eliminate war. We're not going to change human nature any time soon."[17] And on confronting the argument in 1989 that at least some sorts of war might be in the process of notable decline, Samuel Huntington proclaimed that to be quite implausible due in part to the "weakness and irrationality of human nature," not to mention the human capacity for behavior that is "stupid, selfish, cruel, and sinful" (1989, 10).

Yet war may be disappearing without much in way of perceptible changes--or improvements--in human nature. Nor has the "aggressive drive" been noticeably attenuated. Testosterone levels seem to be as high as ever, and the thrill and exhilaration that war and combat often incite do not seem to have diminished. Nor has any sort of psychic "moral equivalent" for war--or for that matter a practical one--been fabricated.

Some have seen the impetus for war not so much in human nature as in the nature of the political leadership. However, it does not seem likely that today's leaders are more rational or competent than ones of old, that they are less susceptible to bias and misperception, or that they lust less for power. Evolutionary theories about the value and persistence of war do not seem to be doing very well either.

Resentments

Nationalism, religious extremism, and social inequalities seem to be about as common as ever, and there do not seem to be notable reductions in the world's considerable store of hate, selfishness, and

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[14] www.un.org/events/tenstories

[15] Tierney 2005, plus, reports Easterbrook, a few radio interviews.

[16] See also Gurr 2000.

[17] In the film, "The Fog of War" (2003).

racism. Extrapolating from the apparently ethnically-based conflict in Bosnia in the early 1990s, Samuel Huntington promulgated a notion about "clashes of civilizations." But although there is no reason to think civilizational angst has decreased since his book appeared in 1996, civil warfare stemming from that (or any other) condition has declined remarkably, and Bosnia has, at least so far, slumped into a completely peaceful condition.

Looking at the issue from the opposite perspective, there do not seem to be notable increases in the amount of love, justice, harmony, cooperation, brotherhood, good will, or inner peace in the world. Yet war has declined without benefit of such developments.

Weaponry

There has been no great growth in the number of ingenious agreements to restrict arms or the arms industry--indeed arms seem to be everywhere and international trade in them continues apace. That is, the arms industry, oft held in the literature to be peculiarly nefarious and a source, inspiration, instigator, or facilitator of war, continues to do quite nicely even as war itself slumps in frequency.

Moreover, although there has been some reduction in the number of nuclear weapons in the possession of major countries since the end of the Cold War, they still retain impressive arsenals. In addition, nuclear weapons continue to proliferate, albeit at a pace much slower than has often been feared.

On the other hand, there is also the argument in the literature that nuclear weapons have actually kept the world from stumbling helplessly into a repeat of World War II. This contention holds that, although the people in charge of world affairs since that event have been the same people or the intellectual heirs of the people who tried assiduously, frantically, desperately, and, as it turned out, pathetically, to prevent it, they were so obtuse, depraved, flaky, desperate, or stupid that only visions of mushroom clouds could lead them to conclude that a repeat performance of that catastrophe would be distinctly unpleasant. However, whatever value there may be in this perspective, it hardly explains the infrequency of international war in the periphery, the several times nuclear countries have been directly challenged militarily (Falklands, Yom Kippur, Afghanistan, Iraq), or, in particular, the apparent and remarkable decline of colonial and civil war.

Economics

If the demise of war is dependent on economic development or on the achievement of some sort of economic equality among (or within) nations as many have postulated, there seems to be a long way to go: the earth has hardly been enveloped in prosperity, while miserable poverty and spectacular economic inequalities remain. There have been notable increases in international trade and in economic interdependence, but there clearly is a long way to go on this as well.

International communications have also greatly improved, but the connection between this still rather limited development and the decline of war is difficult to divine.

Institutions

Many international relations scholars have rooted the causes of war in the state or in the state system with its permissive condition of "anarchy." As Waltz concludes, "Force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy" (1959, 238). Working from this perspective, it has often been concluded that war, particularly international war, would persist unless effective international organizations or a world government were to be fashioned to deal decisively with them. At times, hopes for this have been placed in the United Nations and its provocatively named "Security Council." The UN may deserve credit for a number of achievements over its history, but no one is likely to accuse it of having become an effective world government, and therefore "anarchy" persists.

Actually, in a condition in which international war does not take place, anarchy might come to be desirable: a condition where states could peacefully go about their business without being hampered by arbitrary government regulation.

Similarly, coherent and effective systems of international law have hardly been developed--indeed, many prominent law schools do not even include the subject in their curriculum. Effective moral prohibitions, including the legalistic renouncing or outlawing of war, also do seem to have been achieved, nor has anything resembling international justice enveloped the world.

Nor does the essential nature of the state or of the nation-state seem to have been mellowed or modified notably. Some subsets of countries have willingly entered into what Karl Deutsch once labeled "security communities" in which they explicitly or implicitly agree to avoid using force or the threat of force in their dealings with each other (1957). Such developments may be more nearly the result of the desire for peace than its cause in these instances, but, regardless, the vast majority of states remain outside such enveloping unions.

Democracy, many have argued, is conducive to peace, or at least to peace between democratic states. This notion was central to Woodrow Wilson's quest to "make the world safe for democracy." He and many others in Britain, France, and the United States had become convinced that, as Britain's Lloyd George put it later, "Freedom is the only warranty of Peace" (Rappard 1940, 42-44). However, although there has been a considerable increase in the number of democratic countries in the world, trends in the demise of war seem to have considerably outrun it.

Responses

Most political scientists seem still to consider war to be normal and an inevitable part of international and domestic life. Effectively, even if they accept the trend I have outlined as genuine, they are inclined to see it simply as a readily reversible blip: as one commentator put it to me, "I still have faith in my fellow man." And perhaps they are right--I have no way to be certain that the trend in warfare, particularly civil warfare, will continue on its notable, but only rather recent, downward trajectory.

Moreover, even if war fades, there will be all sorts of other calamities to occupy our attention: the decline of war hardly means that everything is perfect. Crime and criminal predation will still exist, and so will terrorism which, like crime, can be carried out by individuals or by very small groups.[18] And there will certainly be plenty of other problems to worry about--famine, disease, malnutrition, pollution, corruption, poverty, politics, and economic travail. Moreover, violent intercommunal warfare remains rather extensive, a costly phenomenon that is excluded from my definition of war through its requirement that a government be one of the parties in the armed conflict.

However, a continuing decline in war does seem to be an entirely reasonable prospect. And it may be at least time to begin to consider not so much that we ain't gonna study war no more, but rather that war, as with formal dueling as Gooch rather prematurely suggested a hundred years ago, may become a matter mainly of historical interest.

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[18] However, terrorism, or at least international terrorism, actually only kills a few hundred people a year worldwide outside, of course, of 2001.

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Figure 1: Frequency of War, 1946-2004
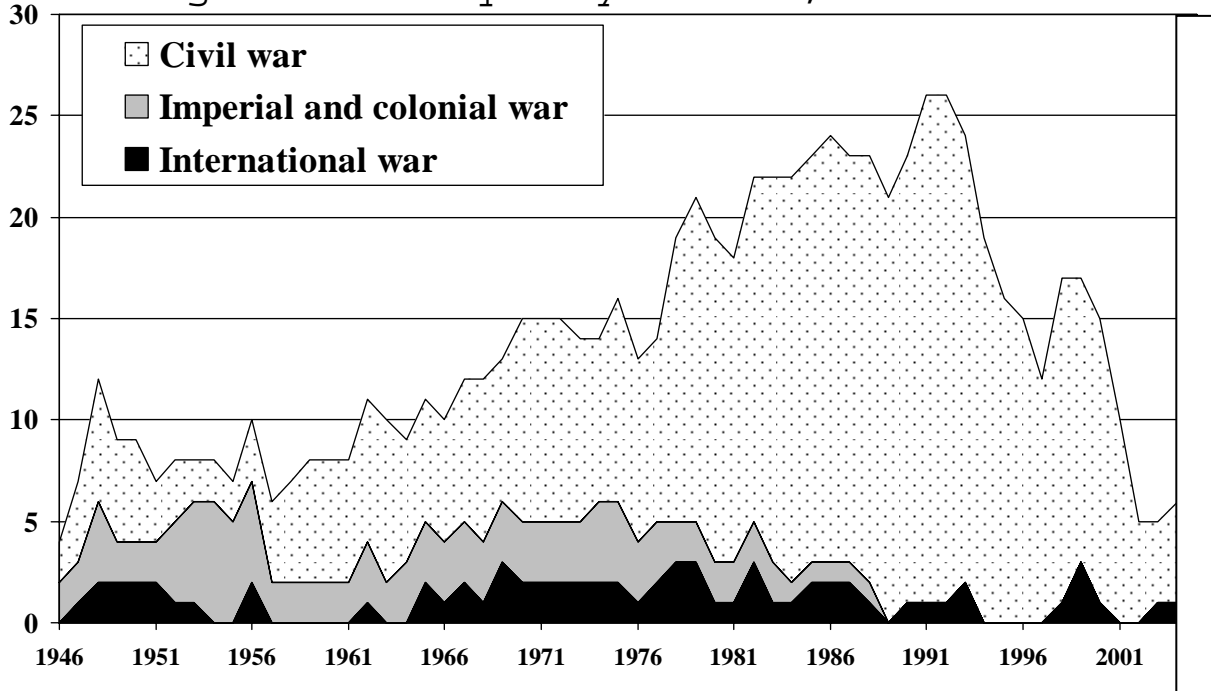
The data are for "wars," violent armed conflicts which result in at least
1000 battle deaths over the duration of the dispute for international wars,
an average of at least 1000 battle deaths per year for imperial and colonial
wars, and at least 1000 military and civilian battle-related deaths per year
for civil wars.
Source: Gleditsch 2004, plus additional correspondence with Gleditsch.