

## IS WAR STILL BECOMING OBSOLETE?

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**ABSTRACT:** In Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War I concluded, as the subtitle suggests, that "major war" (defined as "war among developed countries") is obsolescent (defined as becoming [not being] obsolete). Although war obviously persists in the world, an important and consequential change has taken place with respect to attitudes toward the institution of war, one rather akin to the processes by which the once-accepted institutions of slavery and dueling became extinct.

This paper develops eleven topics that relate to the theme of the book:

1. Summarizes the obsolescence of major war argument.
2. Deals with the argument that nuclear weapons have largely been irrelevant to the remarkable absence of war in the developed world since 1945.
3. Speculates about the future of war in the post Cold War era.
4. Discusses the connection, if any, between war-aversion and pacificism.
5. Deals with the continuing fascination with war in a era free from major war and also with the notion that war is somehow the natural fate of the human race.
6. Expands the book's suggestion that Hitler was a necessary condition for world war in Europe.
7. Considers what the demise of the Cold War suggests about the concept of polarity and about the tenets of some forms of realism.
8. Maintains that terms like "power" and "anarchy" are becoming increasingly unhelpful in assessing international affairs.
9. Stresses the notion that ideas often function as important independent variables and can be ignored only at great peril.
10. Suggests that ideas like war aversion are not learned but bought, and sets out some notions about how ideas are marketed.
11. Argues that the relationship between democracy and war aversion may be historically spurious.

In Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War I concluded, as the subtitle suggests, that "major war" (defined in the sixth paragraph as "war among developed countries") is obsolescent (defined in your average dictionary as becoming [not being] obsolete).

Since I was writing the book while a bloody international war was raging between Iran and Iraq, and while civil wars were going on El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Cambodia, Lebanon, Angola, Iraq, Nicaragua, Peru, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and several other places, it was fairly obvious that war had not exactly been extinguished on the globe. Nonetheless, it seemed to me that an important and consequential historical change has taken place with respect to attitudes toward the institution of war, one rather akin to, though certainly not identical with, the processes

by which the once-venerated and widely accepted institutions of slavery and formal dueling became extinct.

In this paper I would like to discuss several topics that relate in various ways to the theses of Retreat from Doomsday. There are eleven essentially self-contained sections. The first summarizes the obsolescence of major war argument, and the second deals with the argument that nuclear weapons have largely been irrelevant to the remarkable absence of war in the developed world since World War II. The third speculates about the future of war in the post Cold War era. The fourth discusses the connection, if any, between war-aversion and pacificism. The fifth deals with the continuing fascination with war in a era free from major war and also with the notion that war is somehow the natural fate of the human race. The sixth expands the book's suggestion that Hitler was a necessary condition for world war in Europe. The seventh considers what the demise of the Cold War suggests about the concept of polarity and about the tenets of some forms of realism and neo-realism. The eighth maintains that terms like "power" and "anarchy" are becoming increasingly unhelpful in assessing international affairs and ought to be recast or, perhaps, abandoned. The ninth seeks to deal with some more general, perhaps theoretical, concerns about cause and effect in international affairs, stressing the notion that ideas often function as important independent variables and can be ignored only at great peril. The tenth suggests that ideas like war aversion are not learned but bought, and sets out some notions about how ideas are marketed. And the eleventh argues that the relationship between democracy and war aversion may be historically spurious.

### 1. The obsolescence of major war

Retreat from Doomsday focuses on attitudes toward war--at least toward war in the developed world--and concludes that these have changed in highly significant ways. At one time Europeans widely viewed warfare as something that was natural and normal: as Michael Howard has observed, "war was almost universally considered an acceptable, perhaps an inevitable and for many people a desirable way of settling international differences." Oliver Wendell Holmes told the Harvard graduating class in 1895 that war's message was "divine," John Ruskin found war to be the "foundation of all the higher virtues and faculties of men," Alexis de Tocqueville concluded that "war almost always enlarges the mind of a people and raises their character," Émile Zola considered war to be "life itself," Igor Stravinsky believed that war was "necessary for human progress" (Mueller 1989, ch. 2).

In partial consequence of this point of view, Europe was a cauldron of both international and civil conflict--the continent was, in fact, the most warlike in the world. Thomas Jefferson, with a mixture of amazement and disgust, called it an "arena of gladiators" where "war seems to be the natural state of man" (1939, 262-63).

Attitudes toward war have changed profoundly in the twentieth century in Europe. There is no way to quantify this change except perhaps through a rough sort of content analysis: a hundred years ago it was very easy to find serious writers, analysts, and politicians in Europe and the United States who hailed war "not merely as an unpleasant necessity," as Roland Stromberg has observed, "but as spiritual salvation and hope of regeneration" (1982, 1-2). By now, such views have become extremely rare. This may not quite be the "systematic evidence demonstrating that Europeans believe war is obsolete" that John Mearsheimer has called for (1990, 41), but it does suggest that the appeal of war, both as a desirable exercise in itself and as a sensible method for resolving international disagreements, has diminished markedly on that once war-racked continent. War has hardly become obsolete, but war in the classic Eurocentric sense

has, I think, started to become so.

Most of this change took place, it seems to me, at the time of World War I. Before the war, there had been substantial political agitation against the institution of war for the first time in history, and the experience of that cataclysmic war helped enormously to put the anti-war movement's message across while deflating the protestations of war advocates (see also Section 10 below and Mueller 1991a).

The experience of World War II embellished this process (and it was probably crucial for the distant Japanese), but I think that war came to Europe in 1939 not because it was in the cards in any important sense, but because it was brought about by the maniacally dedicated machinations of Adolf Hitler, an exceptionally lucky and spectacularly skilled entrepreneur (more on this argument in Section 6 below). Mearsheimer argues that "if any war could have convinced Europeans to forswear conventional war, it should have been World War I, with its vast casualties" (1990, 30; see also Van Evera 1990/91, 33). Although I do not think it was casualties alone that caused the change (see Mueller 1991a, 4-11), the consequence of the First World War was that the vast majority of Europeans did forswear war--at least war of that sort. Indeed, one of the reasons Hitler was so successful for so long was that his opponents assumed that, since it was so obvious that no one could want another war, he must be serious when he continuously professed his yearning for peace.

An important consequence of this change is that Europe (and the developed world in general) has experienced an almost complete absence of warfare since 1945. As Evan Luard has noted in his masterful study, War in International Society, "Given the scale and frequency of war during the preceding centuries, this is a change of spectacular proportions: perhaps the single most striking discontinuity that the history of warfare has anywhere produced" (1986, 77). And Jack Levy calculates that "the probability of no war occurring between the handful of leading states in the system" for such a long time is about .005 (1991, 147).

There was, however, an important contest between East and West. It stemmed, I think, from the essential belief by many important Communists that international capitalism, or imperialism, was a profoundly evil system that must be eradicated from the face of the globe and by violence if necessary (see also Section 7 below). Moreover, they felt they were duty-bound to assist in this inevitable historical process. I don't think the Soviets ever envisioned major war as a sensible method for carrying out this scheme, but they did consider valid such tactics as violent revolution, bluster and crisis, and revolutionary wars in what came to be called the Third World.

By the time the book was completed in 1988 (see also Mueller 1986), it seemed to me that Communist ideology was in the process of very substantially mellowing on this central confrontational issue, and therefore that we might soon come to the end of the world as we knew it, that the arms race might reverse itself, and that East and West might soon find themselves linked in previously-inconceivable alliance relationships. In the period since the book came out, much of that has transpired, though with a speed and thoroughness I still find breathtaking.

I do not hold that everything is getting better in every way, nor do I hold that everything people generally consider bad will vanish from the earth. But things do change. Slavery used to be an institution as venerable and apparently as natural and inevitable as war. Formal dueling used to be widely accepted as an effective method for resolving certain kinds of disputes. Both became thoroughly discredited and then obsolete. There is reason to believe the institution of war could eventually join their ranks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington notes that "Murder has been unacceptable in civilized societies for millennia, and yet it seems

## 2. The irrelevance of nuclear weapons in the long peace

Particularly remarkable in the long peace that has prevailed in the developed world since 1945 has been what I have characterized as "history's greatest nonevent": the absence of war between two such heavily armed and often intensely hostile opponents as the United States and the Soviet Union. Although this phenomenon is often credited to the sobering existence of nuclear weapons, in Retreat from Doomsday (and also in Mueller 1985, 1988; see also Vasquez 1991; Luard 1986, 396) I argue that, even if nuclear weapons had never been invented, World War III was never really very likely to break out.

This is because, first, the countries capable of starting it, insofar as they ever even considered the possibility, have been essentially content with the territorial status quo--they, after all, were the victors of the Second World War and have a great deal to lose. And, second, they had already been sufficiently sobered by the conventional destruction of earlier wars. After all, the countries dominating the world after 1945 were among those many states which had been plenty sobered by World War I, and they had worked desperately to prevent a repetition of that war. And, when it was forced upon them, they found it to be horrible and undesirable, just as they had anticipated. To expect these countries to march off into a repetition--whether embellished with nuclear weapons or not--seems excessive. That is, although the people who have been running world politics since 1945 have had plenty of disagreements, they have not been so obtuse, depraved, flaky, or desperate as to need visions of mushroom clouds to conclude that major war, win or lose, could be distinctly unpleasant.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, international stability has been very substantially overdetermined: nuclear weapons may well have enhanced stability, but this enhancement has been purely theoretical--"extra insurance against unlikely calamity" (Mueller 1989, 218-19).<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Waltz suggests that "nuclear weapons have drastically reduced the probability of [a war] being fought by the states that have them" (1990, 745). Mearsheimer notes that nuclear deterrence is "much more robust than conventional deterrence" (1990, 31). And Robert Jervis stresses that nuclear weapons can cause

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unlikely that the murder rate in twentieth-century New York is less than it was in fifth-century Athens" (1989, 7). And, obviously, the list could be expanded to include things like rape, incest, robbery, and impure thinking. But slavery and formal dueling (and war) are institutions that require support and acceptance from society as a whole, or at least from significant relevant sections of it, and they cannot be effective if they go out of fashion with the relevant portions of society. Certain forms of social murder--crucifixion, human sacrifice, and capital punishment, as well as dueling--have, in fact, largely gone out of existence in the developed world. On the other hand abortion, once considered a barbarity and still held to be a form of murder by many, has increased as social acceptance has grown. Incidentally, while there seem to be no good data on the murder rate in fifth-century Athens, the studies of Ted Gurr suggest that murder in what we now call the developed world has been declining for several centuries.

<sup>2</sup> At a conference of the Nuclear History Program in Washington, DC, in September 1990, Georgy Kornienko, a member of the Soviet foreign ministry since 1947, said he was "absolutely sure" the Soviets would never have initiated a major war even in a nonnuclear world. The weapons, he thought, were an "additional factor" or "supplementary," and "not a major reason." For the argument that Soviets never contemplated, much less planned for, an offensive to the west, see Ambrose 1990; Khrushchev 1974, 533.

<sup>3</sup> To demonstrate that nuclear weapons have made an important difference, Carl Kaysen argues if that nuclear weapons had been invented in the 18th century, the war-loving absolute monarchs of that era "would certainly change their assessment of the relative virtues of war and peace" (1990, 61-62). But the leading countries since 1945 already vastly preferred peace to major war, and thus needed no conversion.

destruction that is "unimaginably enormous" to both sides, and can do so extremely quickly (1988, 31-36). But it is important not only to compare probabilities and degrees of robustness or to note increased degrees of destructiveness, but also to consider what those levels were before they were changed. A jump from a 50th story window is quite a bit more horrifying to think about than a jump from a 5th story one, and quite a bit more destructive as well; but anyone who enjoys life is readily deterred from either adventure.

However, while I hold that nuclear weapons haven't "been very important in shaping the course of international history" (1989, 111), and while I contend that nuclear weapons haven't been necessary to keep the leaders which have existed since 1945 cautious about major war, I do believe there are "imaginable circumstances under which it might be useful to have nuclear weapons around" such as the rise of another "lucky, clever, risk-acceptant, aggressive fanatic like Hitler" (1989, 218-19). Thus, even if one concludes that nuclear weapons have not been necessary to preserve peace, it might still make sense to have some for added insurance against severe anachronism. Insofar as a military deterrent was necessary, the fear of another World War II has been quite sufficient (indeed, more than sufficient, I expect) for the particular countries which have actually existed since 1945. But it does not follow that that fear alone could prevent all imaginable wars.

Central to all this is the issue of escalation. If a would-be aggressor thinks a move might very well escalate to something terrible like a world war (with or without nuclear weapons), caution is likely to ensue. Where that fear is lacking (as with the Argentines when they launched military action against the interests of nuclear-armed United Kingdom in 1982), war can come about.<sup>4</sup> The belief in escalation may be something of a myth--certainly, the great powers have been remarkably good at carrying out their various tangles and disagreements far below the level of major war (Mueller 1989, 236-40). I think the trends with respect to major war are very favorable but, since peace could be shattered by an appropriately fanatical, hyper-skilled, and anachronistic leader who is willing and able to probe those parameters of restraint, it would be sensible to maintain vigilance (1989, 236-40).

### 3. The future of war

In the last few years we seem to have experienced something like the functional equivalent of World War III. The recent pleasantness (as Winston Churchill might have called it) was preceded, like its unpleasant and far noisier predecessors of 1914 and 1939, by a lengthy process in which rival countries proclaimed competitive visions of the way the world ought to be ordered as they jockeyed for position, armed themselves to the earlobes, made threatening noises, and confronted each other in traumatic crises. Like World Wars I and II, a consequence of the event was that a major empire was dismembered, important political boundaries in Europe were reorganized, and several nations were politically transformed. And, as the ancient institution of monarchy met its effective demise in Europe in World War I and as the newer, but dangerous and

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<sup>4</sup> Waltz argues that "contemplating war when the use of nuclear weapons is possible focuses one's attention not on the probability of victory but on the possibility of annihilation....The problem of the credibility of deterrence, a big worry in a conventional world, disappears in a nuclear one" (1990, 734). British nuclear retaliation was certainly possible, yet the Argentines apparently did not find it credible. On this issue, see also Luard 1986, 396. Jervis suggests that the fear of escalation is more vivid and dramatic in the nuclear case (1988, 35-36). This may be true, but it is necessary in addition to demonstrate that those running world affairs have needed such vivid reminders. It is interesting, incidentally, that the vision of escalation that traumatized John Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis was a conventional one: 1914.

seemingly virile, ideologies of Nazism and Fascism were destroyed by World War II, so a major political philosophy, Communism, over which a great deal of ink and blood had been spilled, was discredited and apparently expunged in World War III.

There are similarities in the aftermaths of the wars as well. Following World Wars I and II it took about for years for the basic political order to be settled, after which it remained substantially stable until revised by the next war (or war-equivalent). Thus, after 1918 there were several years of turmoil in central and eastern Europe and of civil and local war in the Soviet Union. And after 1945 it took about four years for the Soviet Union to consolidate its hold on East Europe (including Czechoslovakia), for Yugoslavia to move into neutrality, for NATO to be formed, and for civil wars in China and Greece to be concluded. In the wake of World War III, a similar process of shaking-out seems to be going on in East Europe and in the Soviet Union--and perhaps also in China where aged leaders are trying to counter an apparently inevitable historic process.

In addition, the victors of World War III, like their predecessors in 1918 and 1945 (and, for that matter, 1815), have been given to aiding their former enemies and to proclaiming a new world order in which countries previously at odds can expect to work together in international police work. After World Wars I and II, such hopes were rather short-lived. We will have to see if history repeats itself in this respect.

While there may be some merit in considering the experience of the last few years to have been the functional equivalent of a world war, there are at least two extremely important respects in which the conceit fails miserably. First, while World War III may have caused great changes in international politics, it did not, unlike World Wars I and II, notably change the world's military balance. Indeed, about the only thing that hasn't changed in the last few years is the balance of weaponry, particularly the supposedly-crucial nuclear weaponry, arrayed on both sides. This issue and its implications will be discussed in Section 7.

Second, the recent cataclysm, unlike its bloody predecessors, was astoundingly quiet: it took place almost completely without violence or bloodshed, and, to a very remarkable extent, without much in the way of recriminations, at least so far. As we venture through the aftermath of what I have characterized as World War III, it may be useful to speculate on the prospects that substantial violence can be contained or avoided in the current version of the new world order (see also Mueller forthcoming).

The prospects for major war. It may not be completely irrelevant to point out that in distant memory there was a time--a few years ago--when very many people were consumed by the concern that a war might break out among developed nations. Remember the sword of Damocles? Remember the two scorpions in a bottle? Remember the ticking doomsday clock on the cover of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists? "Nuclear war," observed Bruce Russett in 1983, "is the central terror of our time" (1983, 1).

Moreover, as the doomsday clock kept suggesting, many thought calamity was imminent and/or nearly certain. In 1945, H. G. Wells declared that "The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded" (1968, 67), and the usually prescient Joseph G. Grew concluded, "A future war with the Soviet Union is as certain as anything in this world" (Gaddis 1987, 218n). In 1950, Arnold J. Toynbee wrote, "In our recent Western history war has been following war in an ascending order of intensity; and today it is already apparent that the War of 1939-45 was not the climax of this crescendo movement" (1960, 4), and Albert Einstein was certain that "Unless we are able, in the near future, to abolish the mutual fear of military

aggression, we are doomed" (1960, 533). In 1960, strategist and futurist Herman Kahn wrote, "I have a firm belief that unless we have more serious and sober thought on various aspects of the strategic problem...we are not going to reach the year 2000--and maybe not even the year 1965--without a cataclysm" (1961, x), and C.P. Snow assured his listeners that unless nuclear weapons were restricted, it was a "certainty" that within "at the most, six years, China and several other states [will] have a stock of nuclear bombs" and that within "at the most, ten years, some of those bombs are going off" (1961, 259). In 1979, Hans J. Morgenthau concluded that "the world is moving ineluctably towards a third world war--a strategic nuclear war. I do not believe that anything can be done to prevent it. The international system is simply too unstable to survive for long" (Boyle 1985, 73). And three years later William McNeill advocated that a "global sovereign power willing and able to enforce a monopoly of atomic weaponry" be fabricated because the "alternative appears to be sudden and total annihilation of the human species" (1982, 383-84), while Jonathan Schell proclaimed, "One day--and it is hard to believe that it will not be soon--we will make or choice. Either we will sink into the final coma and end it all or, as I trust and believe, we will awaken to the truth of our peril...and rise up to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons" (1982, 231).

In my opinion, this concern about the imminence of major war during the Cold War era was very much overdone (Mueller 1989, chs. 4-10), but it is surely clear that, whatever the likelihood may have been in the past, the prospects of a global war are far lower today. The most likely way such a war could have come about was out of the deep rivalries and disagreements between the well-armed Cold War contestants. With the evaporation of that contest, the prospects for major war have substantially diminished--even though the earth has hardly been cleansed either of trouble or of nuclear weapons.

The frequency of local wars. As recent experience reminds us, local wars are still entirely possible, and there have been a lot of them since 1945--though the vast majority of these have been civil wars. In the wake of World War III, there are three factors which may work to reduce the incidence of local wars and perhaps to resolve ones that are ongoing.

First, as Communism died, so did many romantic myths about violent revolution. For decades Communism had preached that successful revolutions and wars of liberation in the third world would be followed by social, political, and economic bliss. But in each of the 10 countries that edged or toppled into the Communist camp between 1975 and 1979 successful revolutionaries variously led their societies instead into civil war, economic collapse, and conditions of severe social injustice.

Through the 1970s at least, quite a few people--not only Communists--were still working up enthusiasm for violent, undemocratic revolution. In her multiple-award winning 1972 book about Vietnam, Fire in the Lake, American journalist Frances Fitzgerald, in consonance with many people around the globe, fairly glowed with anticipation at what successful revolutionaries could bring to Southeast Asia: "when `individualism' and its attendant corruption gives way to the revolutionary community," she breathlessly anticipated, "the narrow flame of revolution" will "cleanse the lake of Vietnamese society from the corruption and disorder of the American war" (1972, 589-90). Neither corruption nor disorder were eradicated when revolution's narrow flame sliced through Vietnam, and notable evils were perpetrated. The disasters that followed the successful revolutions in Vietnam and elsewhere principally cleansed the world of the notion that revolution can be cleansing. Increasingly, violent revolutionary movements in places like Peru,

El Salvador, and the Philippines have come to seem anachronistic.<sup>5</sup>

Second, although I am not terribly hopeful about this, there may be something of an exhaustion with war in much of what used to be known as the Third World (which is where virtually all warfare has taken place since 1945). At present there are no international wars going on anywhere in the world, and several civil wars have ended in the last couple of years, while many of the others may be in the process of winding down. On the other hand, of course, the decline may very well prove to be a mere hiatus between periods of warfare in the area.

It is interesting in this regard that many people found Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 to be remarkably odd. Although the Iraqis had been building up troops on the border, the director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency "just did not find it conceivable that Saddam would do something so anachronistic as an old-fashioned land grab. Countries didn't go around doing things like that anymore" (Woodward 1991, 217). That perspective may be premature since there have been a number of out-of-the-blue land grab efforts in recent memory--by such countries as India (1961), China (1962), and perhaps Iraq (1980)--but the general notion that that sort of behavior is going out of style may prove to have substance.

Third, as violent revolution has become discredited, peaceful democratic reform has begun to look pretty good by comparison, and the democratic idea has flared up--not unlike, perhaps, a narrow flame--throughout the world. Democracy is an imperfect, but often effective, method for resolving local conflicts peacefully and for placating aggrieved minorities (see Larrabee 1990/91 84, 88; Mueller 1990, 1991b).

Opposed to these three factors, however, are the escalating troubles in other areas, particularly within the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, where turmoil is clearly increasing and civil war remains a brooding possibility. And, I also suspect the other shoe has yet to drop in China.

In addition, there is another possible new source of war. If it becomes fashionable to use force to impose democracy (as in Grenada and Panama), one might expect to see a series of short, assertive wars in the Third World committed by the United States and its western allies. Cuba might become a future arena. The Gulf War, however, seems to be leaving an unpleasant aftertaste, and the experience may not inspire great calls for repetition unless there are severe provocations.

The extensiveness of local wars. Comparatively few wars since 1945 have been started by the major belligerents in the Cold War, but quite a few local wars have been exacerbated by interfering Cold War contestants. The central point of Communist ideology was that violent conflict was pretty much inevitable, and that the Communist states were duty-bound to help out (see Section 7). And the western policy of containment often suggested that force would have to be used to oppose this thrust.

In addition to Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon (1958), Afghanistan, and Grenada where troops from the U.S., USSR, and/or China became directly involved, the Cold War could be said to have exacerbated violent conflict in Thailand, Burma, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, Cuba, Greece, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, India, Mozambique, Chile, Congo, Brazil, Ethiopia, Algeria, Iraq, various Yemens,

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<sup>5</sup> Focusing on contemporary Latin America, Nancy Bermeo (1990) observes that only gradual change is likely to be effective and that both those who advocate rightist authoritarian approaches and those who advocate violent and immediate routes to socialism have been substantially discredited.



Hungary, Zanzibar, South Africa, Guyana, French Indochina, Malaya, Iran, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

With the demise of the Cold War, it is to be expected that such exacerbation will not take place. To the extent that this means that fewer foreign arms and less aid will now be infiltrated to the local contenders, violence will be lower. Experience suggests, however, that encouragement and sophisticated arms are not required for local warriors to prosper and to commit mayhem.

The new world order as a policing mechanism. In the wake of World War III two contradictory, even paradoxical, lessons about the future of East-West cooperation can be drawn. On the one hand, as the Gulf crisis demonstrated, East-West cooperation has become far easier to arrange than before. On the other, the two sides are likely to find few trouble spots worthy of their cooperative efforts.

During the Cold War, cooperation was extremely difficult to bring about because East and West were locked in an intensely competitive struggle. Now, however, both sides seem to agree that their interests are best served by "a reliable peace" and by "a quiet, normal international situation," as Mikhail Gorbachev has put it. Thus, there is now a strong incentive to cooperate to generate peace and stability.

At the same time, the dynamic of the Cold War contest caused the two sides to believe that their interests were importantly engaged almost everywhere. The Western policy of containment was based on the notion that any gain for Communism would lead to further Western losses elsewhere, while the Soviets held that they were duty-bound to aid anti-Western forces throughout the globe.

As this elemental contest evaporates, most areas of the world have become substantially less important to the two sides. In the 1960s, a civil war in the Congo inspired dedicated meddling by both sides, but today no one seems to want to become involved very much in the civil war in Liberia--still less in such intractable conflicts as those in Lebanon or Sri Lanka. Even costly conflicts in such once-important Cold War arenas as Ethiopia and Cambodia mainly elicit hand-wringing from the former contestants--certainly neither has offered to send troops to pacify and police the situation.

Thus, although both sides have an interest in peace and stability, they probably will be stirred to significant cooperative action only in those few remaining areas, like the Persian Gulf, where they feel their interests to be importantly engaged.

In this respect, the Gulf experience bodes rather well for at least two potential trouble areas: Eastern Europe and Korea. Should resurgent nationalism in the one case or persistent division in the other lead to international conflict or to substantial international crisis, it seems likely that the United States and the Soviet Union, together with Western Europe and Japan, will be launched into cooperative action, possibly even into military action, to contain damage and to rectify problems in these important areas. Although economic sanctions were never allowed to play themselves out in the Gulf, they are relatively cheap to inflict on small-time aggressors and may play a productive role in some lesser areas as well. With respect to the most form of violent conflict--civil wars--the big countries will not be able to stir themselves as readily into action, but present developments in Yugoslavia (mainly by West Europeans) suggest that productive intervention and mediation may be possible at times.

This will certainly be an improvement over the hazardous competition of the Cold War. But euphoria about the imminent emergence of a peaceful new world order or of global collective

security is hardly justified.

The persistence of nationalism. Many people are concerned about what seems to be a resurgence of nationalism in East Europe and within the USSR. Since nationalism, or hyper-nationalism, was a cause of World Wars I and II, this concern is certainly reasonable (Mearsheimer 1990; Van Evera 1990/91).

But it is not clear that nationalism has grown any less strong in peaceful Western Europe. It is certainly true that few national differences there are being expressed in violence, in threats of violence, or in once-fashionable messianic visions about changing the world to reflect the national perspective (see Howard 1991, chs. 2, 4). But that doesn't mean West Europeans are less nationalistic than they were in the 1920s or the 1890s. Do the British (many of them distinctly unamused by the prospects of the new Channel tunnel) love the French any more or less than in days of yore? Do Italians think of themselves less as Italians? Closer economic relations in Europe may only suggest that it has finally dawned on those countries that there is benefit in economic cooperation, not that Europeans love each other any more or that they identify themselves more now as Europeans. (The United States is looking toward a free trade zone with Mexico, but that stems from economic expedience, not from dampened Mexican or American nationalism--the same could perhaps be said about the U.S.-Canada agreement.) German unification was a spectacular (and peaceful) triumph of national desire: if German nationalism had been truly dampened, one might have expected two Germanies to have emerged when the Soviets left, but instead the general conclusion was that an independent East Germany "makes no sense," and the Germans rushed into each other's arms.

Nationalism can lead to war but, as the experience in Western Europe suggests, it does not have to be eradicated for peace to prevail. France and Germany today do not by any means agree about everything but, shattering the pattern of the century previous to 1945, they no longer even conceive of using war or the threat of it to resolve their disagreements. As F. H. Hinsley has put it, in Europe and North America, once "the cockpit for the world's great wars," states "are coming to terms with the fact that war has ceased to be one of their options" (1987, 78-9) at least in their dealings with one another.

It will be of great interest to see if that attitude has infected Eastern Europe as the countries there chart their destinies after the quiet cataclysm we have just experienced. As noted, they did remarkably well at avoiding violence during their liberation from Soviet rule, and that may lead one to hope that, despite national surges and despite the Yugoslavia case, international war, at least, can be avoided in the area. Indeed, nationalism could well be a constructive force: if Poland survives its current test of trauma and turmoil, Polish nationalism will probably have been an important strength.

The catastrophe quota. This survey has been reasonably optimistic about most issues of war and peace in the post-World War III era. As the discussion of nationalism suggests, however, it should not be concluded that conflict itself will somehow go away. Conflict is inevitable because it is impossible for everyone to have exactly the same interests. The issue is not whether conflict will persist, but whether countries will use war to settle these conflicts.

It seems safe to conclude, however, that no matter what happens, the catastrophe quota will always remain comfortably full. For example, in his review in the New York Times of Michael Howard's new book, The Lessons of History, Herbert Mitgang (1991) manages to remain gloomy even when Howard concludes that it is "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" (Howard 1991, 176). Given a half-century of terror and trauma about thermonuclear catastrophe, one might have thought Howard was bringing good, even giddily optimistic, news. Instead, Mitgang became preoccupied by Howard's prediction that local armed conflict will continue.

What seems to happen is that when big evils vanish, lesser ones are quickly promoted to take their place. At one point Mitgang argues that the following observation of Howard's is "prescient": "The one place in the world today where a global conflict might still conceivably originate is the Persian Gulf" (Howard 1991, 169). The only way that statement could be considered prescient would be if one elevated the recent conflict in the Middle East to the status of "global conflict." (I'm old enough to remember a time--a few years ago--when men were men, women were women, and global conflict meant global conflict.) And Mitgang adds that "after two World Wars, it's hard to distinguish local wars from large-scale wars." One would have thought it would continue to be easy to discriminate.

Even though the chances of thermonuclear catastrophe have diminished to the point where remarkably few even worry about it any more, some have espied a new enemy: Japan. Those of the FLASH! JAPAN BUYS PEARL HARBOR! school argue that we must now fear not "missile vulnerability" but "semiconductor vulnerability." And "economics," they apparently seriously warn us, "is the continuation of war by other means" (Huntington 1991, 8, 10).<sup>6</sup> Others have sighted a more vaporous enemy--chaos, uncertainty, unpredictability--and some even have been given to yearning for the old Cold War days when we, like Damocles or like those scorpions in that legendary bottle, were comfortable in our certainty about what the danger was.

It can be a fundamental and analytically mischievous error to confuse peace with tranquility, certainty, or predictability. Peace is quite compatible with trouble, conflict, contentiousness, hostility, racism, inequality, hatred, avarice, calumny, injustice, petulance, greed, vice, slander, squalor, lechery, xenophobia, malice, and oppression--and with chaos, uncertainty, and unpredictability. It is also entirely compatible, as it happens, with economics.

To achieve peace, people do not necessarily have to become admirable or gentle, nor do they need to stifle all their unpleasant instincts and proclivities and disagreements, nor do they need to abandon economics (which, it seems, will always be with us). They merely need to abandon the rather absurd institution of war as a method for dealing with one another. The abolition of slavery may have made the world better, but it certainly did not make it perfect. Similarly, peace is not a utopian condition; it is merely better than the alternative. Thus, misanthropes can take unaccustomed cheer: even in a state of considerable peace there will still be plenty to complain and worry about.

Peace at last? On the other hand, there is some slim danger that the world is on the verge of a condition so blissful that misanthropes will have to strain to find anything to grouse about at all. In a book published in 1623, the religious writer and peace advocate, Eméric Crucé, observed that, "The ancient theologians promised [that] after 6,000 years have lapsed...the world will live happily and at peace." Crucé was alluding to the widely-accepted notions that 1) a day for God takes up 1000 human years<sup>7</sup> and 2) that the life of mankind, following the pattern of the creation

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of economic war comes close to being oxymoronic. There are times when it may make some sense (as when the world ganged up last year against Iraq), but war is substantially zero sum while economic exchange, while not always fully fair or equal, is generally positive sum.

<sup>7</sup> A notion based on two biblical passages: "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just

week, would therefore encompass 6000 years of toil followed by 1000 years of rest. "Now it happens," observed Crucé hopefully, "that this period will soon be over" (1972, 146). In this judgement he was, however, somewhat premature.

There is, regrettably, some disagreement about the age of the earth, but many theologians of Crucé's era had spent much time trying to dope it out. Easily the most famous of these was the Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher (1581-1656). He worked chiefly from biblical information but added both extra-biblical and astronomical data to develop a complete chronology of the history of the earth. His findings, written in Latin, cover exactly 2000 pages of his "Whole Works," and they conclude that God created heaven and earth at 6 pm on Saturday, October 22, 4004 B.C. and that light was created on Sunday, October 23, at high noon (Barr 1985, 591-93; Knox 1967, 105-6). Ussher worked with great care and does not seem to have forced the data to fit preconceived notions, though because of the ambiguity of some of the biblical material it was necessary from time to time to make assumptions that might make even a rational choice theorist blush: for example, to make things come out sensibly, he finds it useful to conclude that when Genesis 11:26 says "when Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran," it means that Terah became the father of Nahor and Haran when he was seventy, but that he didn't become the father of Abram for another 60 years (Barr 1985, 586).

Despite such occasional infelicities (he also ignored the stopping of the sun in the days of Joshua and its brief reverse perambulation in the days of Hezekiah), Ussher's chronology gained substantial acceptance, and for our purposes it clearly forms a useful first approximation.<sup>8</sup> However, an adjustment is necessary if one is to adapt his dating system to ours. Although Pope Gregory XIII had introduced the calendar we use today in 1582, Ussher kept to the old Julian system and, partly because of his agitation, the British did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752 (Barr 1985, 584; 1987, 10). Accordingly, Ussher's datings are 10 days out of synch with ours.

Putting this all together and adjusting dates appropriately, we have an empirical test. If everybody has everything right, we can expect the earth's 6000th year to begin--and therefore peace and happiness to break out--on Friday, November 1, 1996, at 6 pm local (i.e. Iraq) time.

Should war still abound on that day, we could abandon Ussher and test the estimations of some of the other biblical chronologists. By the calculations of the Jesuit thinker, Petavius (1583-1652), the earth's 6000th year will not begin until 2017 (on October 26); by those of Martin Luther (1483-1546), it will come in 2040; by those of the eleventh century Anglo-Norman historian, Orderic Vitalis (and several earlier scholars), it will come in 2048; by those of the great classicist, Joseph Justus Scalinger (1540-1609), it will come in 2050; by those of Calvisius (1556-1615), it will come in 2056; by those published by Bishop John Lightfoot in 1658, it will come in 2072; and by those of Jewish tradition, it will be delayed until 2239 (Barr 1985, 582, 590; 1987, 3, 9; Young 1982, 24; Lightfoot 1989, 26). In all, we have, perhaps, something to look forward to.

#### 4. War aversion and pacifism

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gone by" (Psalm 90:4) and "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8).

<sup>8</sup> Ussher's chronology had several tidy benchmarks. By his reckoning Jesus was born precisely in the year 4000 A.M. (anno mundi) and the temple of Solomon was completed precisely in the year 3000 A.M. Moreover, although he could not possibly appreciate the significance of the finding, he was able to deduce that Noah's flood had begun on Sunday, December 7. Barr 1985, 594, 607.

It can be instructive, I think, to assess the process by which the major institution of slavery became discredited and then obsolete and to suggest that a similar process may well be taking place with respect to war (see Mueller 1989, 11-12; Ray 1989). There is, however, an important flaw in the analogy: "a country that abolished slavery did not have to worry about what other countries were doing," but "a country that would like to abolish war...must continue to be concerned about those that have kept it in their repertoire" (Mueller 1989, 13).<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, a country that has become averse to war will find it unwise simply to lie down and hope that other countries will come to their senses. It must remain wary.

After World War I, it became the central policy of almost all countries in the developed world to avoid war--at least war with each other. To opt out of the war system there were two central paths such countries could take. One was the pacifist approach--be reasonable and unprovocative, stress accommodation and appeasement, and assume the best about one's opponent. The other was the deterrence approach--arm yourself to the teeth and bargain with trouble makers from a position of military strength.

The chief lesson garnered by the end of the 1930s was that, while the pacifist approach might work well with some countries, an approach stressing deterrence and even confrontation was the only way to deal with others. Slowly and reluctantly, war averse countries decided that Germany and Japan were such countries, and that they could only be effectively dealt with by meeting force with force. To that degree, war remained part of the political atmospherics even for the war averse.<sup>10</sup>

In the postwar era, western policy makers became alarmed at the dangers presented by international Communism. There was, and continues to be, a debate about the degree to which the Communist treat was essentially military and could lead to major war. But the lesson learned, perhaps overlearned, from the interwar experience with Hitler and Japan was that one is safest if one assumes the worst. It does not follow, therefore, that because countries maintain strong militaries and the will and ability to use them, that they are necessarily in favor of war. Rather, it seems that, as Michael Howard has put it recently, "today everyone in developed societies belongs to 'the peace movement', even those who, in the name of stability, are most zealously building up their national armaments" (1991, 175).

## 5. The continuing fascination with war

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<sup>9</sup> Another difference is in the effective arguments against the institution. As Ray (1989) demonstrates in considerable detail, slavery seems to have become discredited primarily for moral, and perhaps for aesthetic, reasons. Although abolitionists argued that slavery was, in addition, economically unsound, no slave owner ever gave up his slaves for economic reasons. On the other hand, those propagandizing against war were often productively persuasive when they argued that war was not only immoral and aesthetically repugnant, but economically unsound as well, and that the supposed gains of war and conquest could be achieved more readily by trade. A central propagandist was Norman Angell (1914), who never said war was impossible (though that misconception continues to be popular: see Cohen 1990, 7; Barash 1991, 45; Melloan 1990; Barnett 1991, 86), but did argue, repeatedly and with great passion, that war was futile, particularly economically. For an important discussion of the rise of the "trading state" mentality, see Rosecrance 1986.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion that does not seem to consider these distinctions, see Trachtenberg 1991. For a related critique of American policy toward Japan during this period, and particularly after Pearl Harbor, see Mueller 1991/92.

Many who have watched the Gulf War take place in the last year have been impressed by the passion and even exhilaration that many people in such supposedly war averse countries as Britain and the United States took to the enterprise. It is easy to conclude from such an experience that, since the fascination with war continues, the institution itself is likely to persist. This conclusion does not follow. Formal dueling retains its fascination and its romance, but it still has become obsolete. Chainsaw massacres apparently continue to intrigue, but that does not mean people will necessarily rush out to engage in the practice.

At base, war is a hopeless problem, but it does not seem to be a serious one. The problem is hopeless because it is clearly impossible to make war impossible. It may be true that on some perfectly reasonable level war is a ludicrous, even childish, enterprise. The experience both of human history and of the last year, however, has shown that people, if effectively organized and inspired, will dutifully embrace the absurdity and march off to slaughter each other in large numbers, and that they will accept the experience as appropriate and sensible.<sup>11</sup> The knowledge about how to make war and the capacity to do so, in other words, will always be with us--they can never be fully expunged.

The problem would be a serious one if war were also somehow necessary--if it were a requirement of the human condition or if it fulfilled a crucial social function. It seems to me, however, that, although war exploits natural instincts and proclivities, it is neither necessary nor inevitable. Accordingly, it can shrivel up and disappear without losing its fascination, without a notable change or improvement in human nature, and without being replaced by anything else. People, as it happens, can live quite well without it (see also Mueller 1991c, 1991d).

War as an expression of human nature. In an article published in 1868, Leo Tolstoy, no fan of war, glumly concluded that people kill each other in war because by doing so they fulfill "an elemental zoological law which bees fulfill when they kill each other in autumn, and which causes male animals to destroy one another." This was, he observed, "an inevitable necessity" (1966, 1372).

Another legendary war opponent, the psychologist William James, similarly traces war's existence and persistence to "the rooted bellicosity of human nature" and to man's "innate pugnacity" (1911, 269, 300-1). Somewhat more hopeful than Tolstoy, he proposed in a famous essay in 1910 that these unfortunate qualities could be purged if one established a "moral equivalent of war." This would involve the "military conscription of the whole youthful population" for "a certain number of years" during which the draftees would be forced to dig mines, wash dishes, build roads, construct tunnels, create skyscrapers. This cathartic experience, James felt, would knock the "childishness" out of them while embedding the "martial virtues" in them, and they would "come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas....they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation" (1911, 290-1).

Imbued with a similar perspective, Sigmund Freud concluded in a 1915 paper that war is a "natural thing" with a "good biological basis." At that time he was as fatalistic as Tolstoy about the issue, arguing that "war cannot be abolished" (1957, vol. 14, 229). By 1932, however, he had

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<sup>11</sup> The paradox is neatly suggested by a statement made by Norman Schwartzkopf in October 1990, a few months before he ordered hundreds of thousands of troops into war: "War is a profanity because, let's face it, you've got two opposing sides trying to settle their differences by killing as many of each other as they can" (Woodward 1991, 313).

come closer to James' position: although he still found war "in practice to be scarcely avoidable", he now felt it might be ameliorated if "civilization" could somehow "divert" or "displace" "human aggressive impulses" and the "instinct for hatred and destruction" so that "they need not find expression in war" (1957, vol. 22, 209, 212-14).

Another version of this perspective was embodied in the widely-discussed book, On Aggression, by Konrad Lorenz, published in the 1960s. Lorenz finds war to be "unreasoning and unreasonable" as well as "abjectly stupid and undesirable." He concludes that it can only be explained if one assumes that such behavior "far from being determined by reason and cultural tradition alone, is still subject to all the laws prevailing in all phylogenetically adapted instinctive behavior" (1966, 228-9). That is, man has bred into him an "aggression drive for which in the social order of today he finds no adequate outlet" (1966, 235). Lorenz particularly focuses on "militant enthusiasm" which is "a specialized form of communal aggression" (1966, 259). This is "a true autonomous instinct" and when it is released, "like the sexual urge or any other strong instinct, it engenders a specific feeling of intense satisfaction" (1966, 262).

Like Freud and James, Lorenz proposes to handle the war impetus by engineering devices for "discharging aggression in an innocuous manner" (1966, 269). He finds sport to be such a "healthy safety valve" (1966, 272).<sup>12</sup> He also advocates "personal acquaintance between people" because "personal acquaintance, indeed every kind of brotherly feeling for the people to be attacked, constitutes a strong obstacle to aggression" (1966, 273)--blithely ignoring the fact that many of the most murderous wars have been civil ones, conducted between groups who knew each other only too well. Beyond this, Lorenz also holds out hope for the anti-aggressive effects of education, science, medicine, art ("the universal appreciation of Negro music is perhaps an important step toward the solution of the burning racial problem in America"), humor, love, friendship, and even reason (1966, 277-90).

There seem to be at least two central problems with the notion that war is an expression of a natural aggressive impulse or drive or that it is necessary to satisfy deep psychic needs.

First, even if we grant that there is a natural aggressive impulse, it is remarkably heroic to extrapolate from that impulse to a huge, complicated societal phenomenon like war. Indeed, many students of war would argue that, while emotion, passion, psychic needs, and instinct are not irrelevant to decisions to go to war, for the most part war is, as Clausewitz put it long ago, "merely the continuation of politics by other means" (1976, 87-8). In counter to the glib assertions of Lorenz and others, military historian Michael Howard concludes after a lifelong study of the subject that "the conflicts between states which have usually led to war have normally arisen, not from any irrational and emotive drives, but from almost a superabundance of analytic rationality...Men have fought during the past two hundred years neither because they are aggressive nor because they are acquisitive animals, but because they are reasoning ones." He adds, "Wars begin by conscious and reasoned decisions based on the calculation, made by both parties, that they can achieve more by going to war than by remaining at peace" (1984, 14-15, 22). Luard, in his study of war since 1400, concurs: "Throughout the whole of the period...it is

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<sup>12</sup> Crucé, unlike Lorenz, recognized multiple reasons for war: they were undertaken, he believed, "for honor, for profit, for righting some wrong, and for exercise." But he came to a Lorenzian conclusion about expatiating the last of these causes, which he felt was the most "difficult to remedy." He too set great stock in sport--tournaments and mock battles--as well as in hunting which he found "a noble and fitting exercise for warriors." He added that not only would wild beasts "serve as suitable opponents for working off this desire for violence," but also "savages that do not use reason" and "pirates and thieves who do nothing but steal" (1972, 8, 18, 22-3).

impossible to identify a single case...in which it was not, at the time the war broke out, the deliberate intention of at least one party that war should take place....[W]ar is regarded by states as an instrument which it may be in their interests to use, in certain circumstances, to promote or defend their interests. But it remains an instrument that is used deliberately and intentionally" (1986, 232; see also Blainey 1973, ch. 9; Bueno de Mesquita 1981, ch. 2; Mueller 1989, 227-32; Hinsley 1963, 348).

This issue might be illustrated best by a consideration of the process by which the countries of Europe went to war with each other in 1914--surely one of the most thoroughly examined events in history. Some historians suggest that aggression and a spirit of bellicosity were relevant to the initiation of that war, but all would stress that the decisions were far more complicated. That is, an aggressive impulse or capacity may have helped to facilitate the decisions to go to war, but much more was required to bring it off: impulse alone would never have been sufficient. As Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann notes in his examination of the causes of that war, reason is needed: "no power slides into war" and "decisions which lead to war are made deliberately" (1988, 97).

Second, students of battle would argue that the major problem in warfare is not so much to channel man's natural instinct for aggression, hatred, and destruction, but rather to keep soldiers from giving in to the natural instinct to run and hide (a phenomenon that is surely vastly more common than aggression in animal behavior). To deal with natural fear in combat, as John Keegan has pointed out, military discipline and morale has been maintained by the careful application of bribery, liquor, drugs, religious appeals, male bonding, and sheer, murderous compulsion (1987, 196-7; see also Keegan 1976). In a similar analysis, William Hauser stresses four factors: submission to military authority; loyalty to buddies, leaders, unit, country, and cause; pride in one's unit and oneself; and the fear of the dangers of rearward flight, of punishment, and of disgrace (1980, 188-95).

Beyond this, there is another reason battle (and therefore war) is possible. This reason, however, more closely reflects the perspective of Freud and Lorenz, and it relates to the Gulf War phenomenon and to war's continuing fascination. At least for some people, battle turns out to be a high--war, as James observed, is "supremely thrilling excitement" and "the supreme theater of human strenuousness" (1911, 282, 288). For example, the attitudes of a fifteenth century soldier were put this way: "What a joyous thing is war...When you see that your quarrel is just and your blood is fighting well, tears rise to your eyes. A great sweet feeling of loyalty and pity fills your heart on seeing your friend so valiantly exposing his body to execute and accomplish the command of our Creator. And then you prepare to go and live or die with him, and for love not to abandon him. And out of that there arises such a delectation, that he who has not tasted it is not fit to say what a delight it is. Do you think that a man who does that fears death? Not at all; for he feels so strengthened, he is so elated, that he does not know where he is. Truly he is afraid of nothing" (Vale 1981, 30).

Comments about the delectation of battle became much rarer after World War I, but that doesn't mean combat has ceased to be an elating experience for some. Glenn Gray, an American soldier in World War II, discusses what he calls "the enduring appeals of battle" and stresses three. One of these is "the delight in seeing." He exults in the "fascination that manifestations of power and magnitude hold for the human spirit", and argues that "the chief aesthetic appeal of war surely lies in this feeling of the sublime" which is distinctive for "its ecstatic character in the original meaning of the term, namely, a state of being outside the self." The second is "the delight in comradeship", and he suggests that "there must be a similarity between this willingness of soldier-comrades for self-sacrifice and the willingness of saints to die for their religious faith."



And the third is "the delight in destruction" or "the satisfaction that men experience when they are possessed by the lust to destroy and kill their kind" (1959, 33, 47, 52).

Vietnam veteran William Broyles (1984) has come to a similar conclusion: "War is ugly, horrible, evil, and it is reasonable for men to hate all that. But I believe that most men who have been to war would have to admit, if they are honest, that somewhere inside themselves they loved it too, loved it as much as anything that has happened to them before or since." It is "an experience of great intensity"; it "replaces the difficult gray areas of daily life with an eerie, serene clarity"; "if you come back whole [a notable qualification] you bring with you the knowledge that you have explored regions of your soul that in most men will always remain uncharted"; the most "enduring emotion of war" is "comradeship" and "brotherly love", a "utopian experience" in which "individual possessions and advantage count for nothing, the group is everything." "War may be the only way in which most men touch the mythic domain of our soul. It is, for men, at some terrible level the closest thing to what childbirth is for women: the initiation into the power of life and death." "Most men who have been to war...remember that never in their lives did they have so heightened a sexuality. War is, in short, a turn-on."

And there is more: war can impel soldiers into the exhilaration of superhuman achievement. In a classic study, physiologist Walter B. Cannon has observed that "in times of strong excitement there is not infrequent testimony to a sense of overwhelming power that sweeps in like a sudden tide and lifts the person to a new high level of ability." This often occurs "in the tremendous adventure of war where risks and excitement and the sense of power surge up together, setting free unsuspected energies, and bringing vividly to consciousness memorable fresh revelation of the possibilities of achievement" (1929, 238-9).

Vivid examples of such superhuman achievements can be found in many descriptions of battle. In his history of the Normandy invasion of World War II, Keegan tells the story of the American Staff Sergeant Harrison Summers who was leading a unit against a series of farm buildings held by the Germans. Looking back, he realized that no one was following him and concluded "I've got to finish it." Thereupon he almost singlehandedly charged each building, spraying the defenders with his sub-machine-gun. When the battle was over five hours later he collapsed in exhaustion and was asked, "How do you feel?" He replied, "Not very good. It was all kind of crazy." Or there was Lieutenant Louis Levy who, in what Keegan calls "the strange euphoria of combat," attacked German tanks with grenades and rifle fire while "helmetless, bleeding from the shoulder and laughing like a maniac" (Keegan 1982, 104, 108-10).

The Vikings had a word for such behavior, one that has made it into the English language: they called it "going berserk." Viking raiding parties would have a select group of berserkers who didn't have to row, but were expected to go into a superhuman combat high when the time was appropriate. When they worked themselves into what the medieval Latin sources called furor berserkicus they would howl savagely, bite their shields, and fight with a wild increase of strength. After the battle they would fall into a stupor of exhaustion (Foote and Wilson 1970, 285; Williams 1920, 253-4; Lid 1956).

In some respects these observations enforce the notion that war can be visualized as a natural, if terrible, outlet for instincts of aggression, destruction, and perhaps hatred. William H. McNeill has recently observed that "human beings live with inherited propensities for organized violence that run far deeper than our consciousness" (1990, 192). But while the existence of those natural instincts and propensities may help in an important way to make war possible, they do not make it inevitable or necessary: there seems to be no natural requirement that these qualities be expressed. Gray suggests this when he observes that "thousands of youth who never suspected

the presence of such an impulse in themselves have learned in military life the mad excitement of destroying" (1959, 52). War may have brought out this "impulse", but it wasn't something that would necessarily have come out by itself.

Moreover, once these qualities have been expressed in war, soldiers seem to be able to live out the rest of their lives without again releasing them. Broyles (who has since gone on to a substantial literary career and is the creator of the American television series set in Vietnam, "China Beach") makes this clear: "I never want to fight again", and "I would do everything in my power to keep my son from fighting." And Gray, who became a professor of philosophy at Colorado College, concludes his book by speculating about what will be required "if war is to be extirpated from our race" (1959, 226).

Indeed, the argument can be made even stronger. If men were unable to control the expression of these qualities in a more or less rational manner, war would be impossible.

For wars to be fought men must be able to let their instincts go only on command, and they must be able to rein them in when ordered even when severely provoked (holding their fire when being fired upon, for example). The berserkers did not go into their euphoric state randomly, but when ordered to do so.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, after experiencing the combat high, soldiers must be able, like Gray and Broyles, to slump comfortably back into drab peacetime endeavors without seeking to recreate the combat experience on their own (those few unable to make the transition are locked up in prisons or mental institutions).

Thus, in order to prosecute war, commanders may call upon instincts and proclivities that seem base and terrible to many. But while these instincts and proclivities can be activated if necessary, it is not necessary that they be activated.

Contrary to aggression theory, then, the natural instincts which permit war to happen should be seen as tools or capacities that can be exploited rather than as dynamic forces of nature which must be unleashed, diverted, or bottled up (see also Berkowitz 1989). Tools that no longer seem useful or have become out of date can--like a pesticide that has been found to poison the consumer--be neglected and allowed harmlessly to rust in peace.<sup>14</sup>

War as a useful social institution. A different perspective on the problem of war has been supplied by Margaret Mead. Writing in 1940, she notes that anthropologists had found peoples,

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<sup>13</sup> One source suggests that the berserker was "mentally instable" and "a kind of psychopath." But it also points out that the "ability to go berserk" was a rational one: "to a large extent the berserk seems to have been able to control his animal excitement" (Lid 1956). It is interesting in this regard that players in the National Hockey League, allowed from an early age to give in to their instincts for violent aggression as part of the game, are able to restrain these proclivities when they are up against smooth-skating Soviet players who do not fight back and, accordingly, gain an advantage by avoiding the penalty box.

<sup>14</sup> Something similar could be said about another instinct that many people would consider to be base: our fascination with the grotesque. This instinct was regularly pandered to when there were freak shows, visitation periods for the public at insane asylums, and public executions, institutions which moralists over the last century or two have effectively managed to abolish. People generally seem to be able to function quite well without them, even though it is extremely unlikely that the basic instinct has been bred or repressed out of existence, something suggested by the recurring phenomenon of rubbernecking: an automobile accident causes traffic problems even if it occurs on the other side of a divided roadway because people, however guiltily, slow down to see if they can spot any gore. The servicing of this instinct through fiction, on the other hand, seems to continue unabated--movies and television may today be performing the function once served by live theater (like Punch and Judy shows) and folk tales.

like the Eskimo, who, while "turbulent and troublesome", never go to war. She argues therefore that war is not a natural instinct, but rather merely a social "invention" like "writing, marriage, cooking or food instead of eating it raw, trial by jury or burial of the dead." Peoples will "go to war if they have the invention, just as peoples who have the custom of dueling will have dueling and peoples who have the patterns of vendetta will indulge in vendetta", while "people who do not know of dueling will not fight duels" (1964, 270, 272).

For Mead the problem is that "once an invention is made which proves congruent with human needs or social forms, it tends to persist" (1964, 273). Since warfare is now "part of our thought" and is "firmly entrenched", it can be eliminated only if it is replaced by a new invention: "a form of behavior becomes out of date only when something else takes its place" (1964, 273-4). To support her point, Mead argues that the inventions of ordeal and trial by combat disappeared only when they were replaced by another invention, trial by jury. A somewhat similar conclusion has been reached by many diplomatic analysts. William Rappard, for example, argued in 1940 that war "is a method of settling conflicts of interests and ambitions between sovereign States", and therefore if "war is to be eliminated from international relations, a pacific method of settlement must be substituted for it" (1940, 103-4).

In this Mead and Rappard are in at least partial harmony with James, Freud, and Lorenz. Mead specifically denies that war is either a "biological necessity" or a "sociological inevitability" (1964, 269), but she does conclude that, once invented by a society, war serves, or at least is held to serve, a valued social function. Where James, Freud, and Lorenz argue that war cannot be eliminated until some method is found to channel, divert, or displace instinctual aggressiveness or bellicosity, or to fulfill psychic needs, Mead and Rappard argue that war cannot be abolished until a new device is invented to service the valued social function the institution performs.

As noted, Mead illustrates the process by pointing to the way trial by jury replaced trial by combat. But she also cites dueling as an example of a custom which has died out. That institution, however, was never really replaced by anything. Dueling seems to have evaporated mainly because it came to be taken as a ridiculous mode of behavior, not because it was replaced by some other method to resolve disputes (see Stevens 1940, 280-3; Cochran 1963, 287; Baldick 1965, 199; Mueller 1989, 9-11). It may be true that there were improvements in the responsiveness and effectiveness of the legal system as dueling was dying out. But duels were only rarely fought over issues that the legal system can handle, either then or now: typically they were inspired by conflicts over matters of honor and personal dignity, not over who stole whose cow. Moreover, particularly in the United States, duelists were hardly alienated from the judicial system or disenfranchised from it. In fact, many were lawyers--some 90 percent in Tennessee, for example (Seitz 1929, 30).

Thus, it is entirely possible for an institution that serves, or seems to serve, a useful and valued social function to become obsolete and to fade away without being replaced by any sort of newly-invented functional substitute. It was once held that "dueling, like war, is the necessary consequence of offense", as a dueling manual put it in 1847 (Stowe 1987, 15). Young men of the social set that once duelled do not seem to have noticeably changed their basic nature: they have not become any less contentious or self-centered; they still seem to be deeply concerned about matters of honor and self-image; and they still are quick to take offense. But dueling is no longer a consequence, necessary or not, of such offense. In fact, it does not even occur to them that dueling might be an option. A fabled institution that had been used for centuries to settle differences simply died out and has not been replaced.

As noted earlier, slavery is another institution--one as important in history as war--that has

been all but eradicated from the human experience without replacement, and something similar could be said for other institutions that have died out or have been severely reduced in occurrence over the ages: vendetta or family feuding, for example, or capital punishment, flogging, eunuchism, infanticide, human sacrifice. None required the invention of substitutes. People simply found that they could get along quite well without them.

War. As suggested, it seems to me that war, no matter how fascinating, may well be on its way to joining these obsolete or obsolescent institutions. Like dueling, war is a costly, but often effective, method for resolving quarrels. Like slavery, it has been an important historical institution. But, like both of these obsolete institutions, war is necessary neither to satisfy human impulses nor to make society function. Unlike breathing, eating, or sex, war is not something that is somehow required by the human psyche, by the human condition, or by the forces of history.

The very remarkable decline in war in once-warlike Europe helps to support this conclusion. Some European countries, of course, continued to engage in wars elsewhere, and it could be argued that they were satisfying their natural aggressive urges there. But this is not true for all the states of Europe. Some, including many that were once among the most warlike, appear to have abandoned war entirely.

For example, 500 years ago the Swiss were fierce fighters and were widely sought after as mercenaries. As Lynn Montross has observed, "after their triumph over Burgundy (1477) the Swiss could have challenged any army on the continent." Yet they soon began to betray what Montross calls "a curious indifference to political or territorial aggrandizement" (Levy 1983, 45). Switzerland has now stayed out of all international war for almost two centuries, and it sustained its last civil war in 1847. Anyone who holds that war is required by human nature or that the institution can only vanish when an appropriate substitute is invented needs to supply an explanation for the curious warless condition of the once-warlike Swiss: are they peculiar? have they discovered a moral equivalent (downhill skiing perhaps)? are they a mass of suppressed neuroses?

Other countries have followed a similar path. Scandinavia, home to the war-loving Vikings, has been trying to be war-free for over a century and a half: the Swedes fought their last war in 1815. As a great power, Holland once got into its quota of wars, but it has been working to avoid them since 1713.

Or consider England. Two people musing early in the seventeenth century about the English character (perhaps after a performance of any part of Shakespeare's Henry VI), might well conclude that civil war, if not endemic to human nature, is surely endemic to English nature. England was enjoying a hiatus of civil peace at the time, but the two raconteurs might well conclude that sooner or later the English would again show their true nature by lapsing into a period of civil warfare. And they would have been right. But astoundingly, after the civil war period in the middle of that century, England (if not Britain) abandoned civil war entirely. Once experts at civil war--addicts perhaps--the English have now lived without it for over three centuries and show little sign either of strain or relapse. They have successfully kicked the habit.

Over the last century or two, then, the ancient institution of war, without losing its inherent fascination, has become substantially discredited, at least within the developed world, as a mechanism for carrying out international affairs and for resolving conflicts among nations (and, for the most part, within them). This has required neither an improvement in human nature nor the invention of new devices or institutions to channel instincts or to settle issues.

Peace, war, conflict, and cooperation. But it certainly does not mean that conflict has been eliminated. Conflict, like war, is natural. But unlike war, conflict is necessary and inevitable because it is impossible for everyone to have exactly the same interests.<sup>15</sup> Samuel Huntington contends that one should not ignore "the weakness and irrationality of human nature," and he stresses that although human beings are capable of generosity and wisdom, they are "also often stupid, selfish, cruel, and sinful." As long "as human beings exist," he insists, "there is no exit from the traumas of history" (1989, 10). But it doesn't follow that the human race is fatalistically condemned to express these qualities, and to expiate its traumas, in war. I know of no evidence that young men of the Alexander Hamilton-Aaron Burr class are as a group any less stupid, selfish, cruel, sinful, or contentious today than they were 200 years ago. They simply no longer use the device of dueling to express, or resolve, their conflicts.

As members of the set that once dueled now manage to resolve (or simply live with) their inevitable conflicts without dueling, the nations in a warless world would similarly have to cope. France and Germany today do not by any means agree about everything but, shattering the pattern of the century previous to 1945, they no longer even conceive of using war or the threat of it to resolve their disagreements. As F. H. Hinsley has put it, in Europe and North America, once "the cockpit for the world's great wars," states "are coming to terms with the fact that war has ceased to be one of their options" (1987, 78-9).

Some of the conceptual problem in this area has come from peace advocates over the centuries who have very often argued that peace cannot be secured unless the world first achieves harmony, inner tranquility, cooperation, goodwill, love, brotherhood, equality, and/or justice. It is a reasonable counter to that position to argue that, given human nature and the depth of the difficulties, none of these rather vaporous qualities is ever likely to overwhelm the human race, and therefore that peace is impossible.

But peace does not require that there first be a state of universal love or perpetual harmony or broad justice. Peace is not opposed in principle to any of these qualities, and in some cases it may very well facilitate their wider establishment. But, as suggested earlier, peace is quite compatible as well with conflict, contentiousness, hostility, racism, inequality, hatred, avarice, calumny, injustice, petulance, greed, vice, slander, squalor, lechery, xenophobia, malice, and oppression. To achieve peace, people do not necessarily have to become admirable, nor do they need to stifle all their unpleasant instincts and proclivities; they merely need to abandon the rather absurd institution of war as a method for dealing with one another. The abolition of slavery may have made the world better, but it certainly did not make it perfect. Similarly, peace is not a utopian condition; it is merely better than the alternative. If we stop envisioning it as heaven on earth, it will be easier to achieve and to maintain.

## 6. Hitler as a necessary cause of the war in Europe

Retreat from Doomsday argues that Adolf Hitler was a necessary cause of the Second World War in Europe: that is, but for Hitler, the war there would never have come about.

Marc Trachtenberg says he doubts "whether any serious historian would subscribe" to this view (1991, 289). But some very prominent and respected historians have certainly come very close to embracing it. For example, in a recent book Donald Cameron Watt concludes: "What is

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<sup>15</sup> It is also undesirable: if the potential buyer and seller of food value the product exactly the same, no purchase would take place and starvation would ensue.

so extraordinary in the events which led up to the outbreak of the Second World War is that Hitler's will for war was able to overcome the reluctance with which virtually everybody else approached it. Hitler willed, desired, lusted after war....No one else wanted it, though Mussolini came perilously close to talking himself into it. In every country the military advisers anticipated defeat, and the economic advisers expected ruin and bankruptcy" (1989, 610).<sup>16</sup> And Gerhard Weinberg comes to a similar conclusion: "whether any other German leader would indeed have taken the plunge is surely doubtful, and the very warnings Hitler received from some of his generals can only have reinforced his belief in his personal role as the one man able, willing, and even eager to lead Germany and drag the world into war" (1980, 664). F.H. Hinsley asserts that "Historians are, rightly, nearly unanimous that...the causes of the Second World War were the personality and the aims of Adolf Hitler....[I]t was Hitler's aggressiveness that caused the war" (1987, 71-72). William Manchester observes that the war Hitler started was one "which he alone wanted" (1989, 197), and it is very common for people writing about the era to refer to the European conflagration of 1939-45 as "Hitler's war."

Few would deny that Hitler had a substantial impact on the course of history in the 1930s, and even fewer, perhaps none at all, would deny that Hitler was necessary, indeed crucial, in bringing about the particular war that erupted in Europe in 1939. But many might argue that, because of the social, political, and economic conditions of the times, another major war was generally in the cards in the decades that followed World War I.

I would like to sketch some preliminary arguments and evidence that go beyond the discussion in Retreat from Doomsday to seek to demonstrate that Hitler not only importantly affected the timing and direction of events that culminated in war in 1939, but that there was no momentum toward another world war in Europe, that historical conditions in no important way required that contest, and that the major nations of Europe were not on a collision course that was likely to lead to war. That is, had Adolf Hitler gone into art rather than into politics; had he been gassed a bit more thoroughly by the British in the trenches in 1918; had he succumbed to the deadly influenza of 1919; had he, rather than the man marching next to him, been gunned down in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923; had he been denied the leadership position in Germany; or had he been removed from office at almost any time before September 1939 (and possibly even before May 1940), history's greatest war would most probably never have taken place. I will also suggest some implications that derive from such a conclusion.

The discussion is, of course, a thought experiment--an exercise in counterfactual analysis, an enterprise that many greet with dismay at best, derision at worst. But virtually any historical generalization relies in part on the counterfactual. In the present case, the discussion does not so much seek to create a counterfactual, as to counter one: the common implicit counterfactual which holds that another major war was essentially inevitable in the aftermath of World War I and therefore that if Adolf Hitler, counter to fact, had not been on the scene, the Second World War in Europe, or something like it, would still have come about one way or another.

The momentum toward major war after 1918. As suggested earlier, it is a fundamental and analytically mischievous error to confuse peace with tranquility. Peace is merely the absence of war, not the absence of conflict. In this sense peace descended upon most of Europe in 1918; conflict, however, continued. In many parts of central and eastern Europe, there was substantial discontent with the peace that had been imposed. In particular, the Germans were angry, even

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<sup>16</sup> This passage is quoted approvingly by another distinguished historian, Gordon A. Craig, in a review of the Watt book: "Making Way for Hitler," New York Review, October 12, 1989, p. 11.

outraged, with the way the victors had stripped them of their colonies and of 13.5 percent of their land in Europe, had occupied and neutralized territories on their border with France, had disarmed them, had demanded costly reparations, and had forced them to accept sole guilt for starting the Great War of 1914-18.

It could be argued (indeed, often has been) that these terms were mild compared to those likely to have been imposed by Germany if it had won the war. And it could also be argued that they were mild compared to those imposed upon Germany by the victors of the next war when great chunks of prewar Germany were hacked away and incorporated wholesale into Poland and the Soviet Union, while the remainder was divided among the four occupying countries to rule as they saw fit (Gaddis 1987, 220-21).

But for present purposes it is important to point out that these German grievances after World War I were unlikely, by themselves, have led to another major war. This is because the victors--the British in particular--later came to believe that the peace terms had been unduly and unwisely harsh. Accordingly, they either assisted in removing the grievances or stood idly by as the Germans rectified the peace terms unilaterally. Thus Germany was allowed not only to default on reparations payments, to abrogate the "war guilt" treaty, to reoccupy the lands along the French border, and to rearm, but it was even permitted to expand to take over lands that had never before been parts of the country--the republic of Austria and the German-speaking portions of Czechoslovakia. And the victors stood ready in addition to work for peaceful accommodation concerning those areas in neighboring Poland that contained substantial numbers of Germans.

Thus it is simply not true that the seeds of another great war were planted at the peace conference of 1919. In order to bring about another major war it was necessary for Germany, first, to desire to expand into non-German areas, second, to be willing to risk and threaten military action in order to get these areas, and third, to be willing to pursue war when these desires were opposed by other major countries.<sup>17</sup> It seems to me that none of these propositions--particularly the last two--were very popular in Hitler's Germany, that almost no one accepted all of them, and that only Hitler, it appears, combined a fanatical acceptance of them with a maniacally determined and effective capacity to carry them out.<sup>18</sup>

The argument, therefore, is concerned with three issues: policy, tactics, and personal abilities. First, to what extent was Hitler's policy of expansion accepted by others in Germany? Second, to what extent did others share his willingness to use war as a tactic to carry out these visions? And third, to what extent were Hitler's personal abilities--his capability as a leader, his organizational, political, and public relations skills, his single-minded, ruthless devotion to his goals--necessary to create history's greatest war?

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<sup>17</sup> P.M.H. Bell puts it this way in his recent book on the origins of the war in Europe: "In one important respect...the explanation of the war is extremely simple, and historians have been prone to weave too many mystifications about it. Of the two expansionist powers, Italy was not by herself strong enough to risk or embark on a great war. Germany was; and unless German expansion halted of its own accord without breaching the limits set by the vital interests of other strong and determined states, then war was bound to come" (1986, 300).

<sup>18</sup> That there was no general momentum toward war in Germany is strongly suggested by Fest's observation: "If Hitler had succumbed to an assassination or an accident at the end of 1938, few would hesitate to call him one of the greatest of German statesmen, the consummator of Germany's history. The aggressive speeches and *Mein Kampf*, the anti-Semitism and the design for world domination, would presumably have fallen into oblivion, dismissed as the man's youthful fantasies, and only occasionally would critics remind an irritated nation of them" (1974, 9).

## 1. The policy of expansion

The somewhat mystical notion that Germany needed Lebensraum, living space, in the non-German lands to its east is an old one. As Woodruff Smith has argued, "Nazi imperialism was in many important respects the culmination of a complex process of ideological development extending back to the first half of the nineteenth century" (1986, 3). The Lebensraum portion of this imperialist ideology was largely put together in the 1890s and the term itself was popularized shortly after the turn of the century when Hitler was still planning to become an artist.<sup>19</sup> As developed by 1914, the notion of Lebensraum combined an intense nationalism and an opposition to industrialization with an appeal for migrationist and annexationist colonialism toward the east that was rather similar to the American frontier expansion to its west (Smith 1986, ch. 5).

Lebensraum imperialism survived World War I, at least among several right wing parties. It was variously expressed in demands for the return of Germany's lost colonies (an idea popular even among center and left parties), the return of pre-1914 German lands in Europe removed by the 1919 Versailles peace treaty, exploitation of "underused" agricultural areas within Germany itself, and, for some, expansion into areas to the east. Some on the right also connected these notions with a somewhat mystical form of geopolitics, with racism--particularly anti-Semitism and antipolarism--and with the goal of economic autarky (Smith 1986, 209-23).

Smith argues that the contribution of the Nazi party was "to combine the major tendencies in German imperialism much more successfully than any previous political organization, mainly by fitting them into a larger ideological structure embodied in the party's program." The crucial synthesizer in all this, notes Smith, was Hitler: "of all the major spokespersons for Naziism, the one most responsible for the strongly imperialist direction of the Nazi program as it evolved in the 1920s and 1930s was Hitler himself" (Smith 1986, 231, 238). Or, as Fest suggests, "There is no doubt that a movement gathering together all the racist-nationalistic tendencies would have formed during the twenties without the intervention of Hitler's influence and following. But it would very likely have been only one more political grouping within the context of the system. What Hitler conferred upon it was that unique mixture of fantastic vision and consistency which...to a large extent expressed his nature....To be sure, the numerous emergencies of the period would have led to crises, but without Hitler they would never have come to those intensifications and explosions" (1974, 7-8).

Hitler apparently did not contribute substantially to the party's first programmatic statement of February 1920 which includes, rather incidentally, one demand that could be taken to reflect an expansionary point of view, though it could as well simply be seen as a rather routine demand for a return of Germany's lost colonies: "We demand land and soil (colonies) for the nourishment of our people and for the settlement of our excess population" (Smith 1986, 239; on the ambiguity of this demand, see Hildebrand 1973, 16-17). But after Hitler had obtained "dictatorial powers" within the tiny party in 1921 and by the time he finished his book, Mein Kampf, in 1926, he had clearly embraced a Lebensraum position that called for expansion to the east, expressing it mostly in italics: he proclaimed "land and soil as the goal of our foreign policy;"

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<sup>19</sup> Smith 1986, 83. Klaus Hildebrand puts it this way: "the power-political ideas which Hitler took up were thoroughly familiar in Germany since the nineteenth century, reflecting the desire for a strong central Europe under German leadership, an expansionist policy in the East, an overseas colonial empire and, connected to this, the idea of political and military confrontation between the major powers envisaged on a world scale" (1973, 136).



he ridiculed the "demand for restoration of the frontiers of 1914" as a "political absurdity;" he argued that "state boundaries are made by man and changed by man;" he noted that "we National Socialists...turn our gaze toward the land in the east;" and, in case that wasn't entirely clear, he explained that when he spoke of the "soil policy of the future...we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states" (1943, 649, 653-654; emphasis in the original).

While the general theme of eastern expansion had been around for quite a while and while it was still in the air after World War I, Hitler seems to have been important, and perhaps crucial, for its incorporation not only into effective German foreign policy, but also into Nazi ideology. That is, it was neither obvious or natural that it would emerge as an important theme. As Geoffrey Stoakes concludes, "In Hitler's hands--and it does seem to have been his own concoction--Lebensraum became the key concept in Nazi philosophy" (1986, 216). In fact, even after Hitler took control of the party and even after he had shaped, indeed invented, Nazi ideology, there remained significant opposition to the expansionary Lebensraum plank of the Nazi platform even within the party itself, particularly from the devotedly anti-imperialist group led by Gregor Strasser, who finally left the party in 1932 (Smith 1986, 239; Stoakes 1986, 237; Hildebrand 1973, ch. 1).

Even if Hitler was crucial in making Lebensraum a central part of Nazi ideology and policy, however, it could be argued that the notion of expansion, plain to see in Mein Kampf, must have generated appeal for otherwise Hitler never would have been able to obtain office or to maintain himself there. Thus, if Hitler hadn't been around, the expansionary impulse in the German spirit would probably have found another outlet.

The problem with this argument is that Hitler's own political tactics suggest the expansionary theme was not significantly popular. While expansion may have been central to Hitler's foreign policy thinking and while the theme may have appealed to some Germans, Hitler found it tactically wise to mellow and downplay this element of his propaganda as he neared office, and he effectively reversed it after achieving the Chancellorship in 1933.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it appears that after Mein Kampf Hitler never again in public specifically referred to Russia as a potential area of expansion. As Norman Rich points out, "especially during his first years in power," Hitler "vigorously disavowed all expansionist ambitions" (1973, xi).

In his speeches Hitler stressed issues that resonated with the public--like resentment over the Treaty of Versailles and discontent with economic, social, and political disorder. Not only did he deny any expansionist ambitions, he repeatedly argued that his racism dictated a non-expansionary policy: since he clearly wanted to "purify" the German race, he argued, expansion would pointlessly and absurdly require the assimilation of inferior races into his precious Reich. "We are," he proclaimed, "by conviction and basic tenant, not only non-imperialistic, but anti-imperialistic....National Socialism regards the forcible amalgamation of one people with another alien people not only as a worthless political aim, but in the long run as a danger to the internal unity and hence the strength of a nation." In particular, he argued, an expansionary war would be utterly senseless: "Or racial theory therefore regards every war for the subjection and domination of an alien people as a proceeding which sooner or later changes and

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<sup>20</sup> Something similar happened with Hitler's anti-Semitism. Although he never reversed his oft-proclaimed anti-Semitism, he did tone it down as he came closer to office; then, after becoming Chancellor, he scarcely mentioned the "Jewish question" at all in public for several years and, because of their unpopularity, he was extremely careful to avoid being associated with violent anti-Semitic outrages perpetrated by his followers. See Kershaw 1987, 233-41; also Steinert 1977, 136.

weakens the victor internally, and eventually brings about his defeat....National Socialist Germany wants peace because of its fundamental convictions...Are two million men to be killed to conquer a territory with two million inhabitants? Besides for us that would mean to sacrifice two million of the best Germans, men in the flower of their strength, the elite of the nation, in order to win a mixed population which is not to the full extent German and which does not feel itself to be German. Human logic is against a territorial war" (Hitler 1942, 1216, 1218, 1220, 1260; see also 1099).

Hitler's actions also supported this interpretation. He may have appeared to call for an invasion of Russia in Mein Kampf, but one of his first foreign policy moves was to conclude a ten-year non-aggression pact with Poland, the country that lay directly on his invasion route.

"The problem was not to know what Hitler had written" in Mein Kampf, observes P.M.H. Bell, "but what to make of it" (1986, 77). Why should one accept the ramblings of Mein Kampf, written a decade earlier when Hitler was in prison, over his current speeches as the responsible Chancellor of Germany? Most historians now agree that before he became Chancellor, Hitler had devised an internally-consistent world view, a Weltanschauung, that included war and military expansion (Smith 1986 250; Bell 1986, 77-78; Rich 1973, ch. 1; Weinberg 1970, ch. 2). His actions of the 1930s and 1940s suggest that, basically, he proceeded to carry out these early visions. But this consensus among analysts emerged only decades after the war, and it requires taking Hitler's writings and speeches of the 1920s very seriously and ignoring virtually all of his public utterances of the 1930s. Hitler's contemporaries had no such luxury. Furthermore, as Eberhard Jäckel, one of the most prominent analysts of this issue, has pointed out, Hitler's Weltanschauung was not "the cause of Hitler's political impact. It could not be anything of the sort since hardly anyone, and perhaps not even anyone, among Hitler's followers and contemporaries, had ever gone to the trouble of trying to understand this Weltanschauung in its entirety" (1972, 121). Even in 1943, in the midst of Hitler's war, the American State Department concluded that "it was impossible to deduce from the writings of Hitler and other Nazi leaders that the regime was bent on world power" (Hiden and Farquharson 1983, 129).

Much of Hitler's rhetoric, of course, was meant for foreign consumption--to encourage the appeasers of Europe to give in to their natural proclivities. But it was no less convincing to Germans. As Smith points out, his statements led many business and bureaucratic groups to believe that his goal was to fashion "comprehensive economic agreements with other states that would not require the open exercise of force for their achievement," and Hitler's own economics minister, Hjalmar Schacht, who presided over the astonishing German economic recovery of 1933-36, was comforted in his view that Hitler's plan was to build up "trade agreements with central and eastern European states into a cooperative system centering around industrial Germany" (Smith 1986, 244). Insofar as territorial expansion was desirable, Schacht and other conservatives concluded that regaining colonies in Africa might be desirable--a policy the appeasers in Britain were quite willing to consider. Expansion into areas in east Europe that were as densely populated as Germany itself made little sense--the notion that these areas could be depopulated did not occur to them (Weinberg 1970, 279. British appeasers: Hildebrand 1973, 55).

In private Hitler could be more specific and some of the violent themes of Mein Kampf could reemerge. On February 3, 1933, he addressed the leading German generals and called not only for rapid rearmament, which pleased them, but, according to one of those present, also for the eventual "conquest of Lebensraum in the East and its ruthless germanization," which alarmed them. The generals apparently disregarded the prognosis of an aggressive war, concluding that "these boundless schemes would be halted by the strength of reality and restricted to a reasonable

basis" (Weinberg 1970, 27).

Clearly Hitler was not the only one who embraced the notion of eastern expansion embodied in the Lebensraum mystique. Indeed, Smith suggests that "most Nazis and a great many other Germans thought about policy in this context" (Smith 1986, 252). But Hitler's own public (and, to a degree, private) tactical retreat on the issue suggests that it was not an idea that was greeted with wide approbation. Although it had support from others, the issue was unlikely to come to dominate German foreign policy unless it was assiduously developed by a skilled entrepreneur.

In fact, while "many" may have thought about policy in a Lebensraum "context," some of Hitler's chief Nazi henchmen opposed aggressive eastward expansion and tried to divert Hitler's policy. Hermann Göring, working with members of Hitler's own Foreign Office, apparently sought to develop a peaceful foreign policy built around a strong position for Germany within Europe--one of indirect domination--while pursuing the acquisition of overseas colonies (Hildebrand 1973, 57, 71, 143, 173n21; Stoakes 1986, 237). And Hitler's own Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, far from supporting an invasion to the east as the natural destiny of Germany, advocated instead the formation of anti-British alliance with the Soviet Union and, like Göring, the acquisition of overseas colonies. This view was also supported by members of the German Foreign Office and the navy, as well as by industrial leaders (Hildebrand 1973, 48-49, 58; Stoakes 1986, 238). Indeed, Hildebrand suggests that it was this "apparent wide range of opinion" among German foreign policy officials "which must time and again have provided grounds" for British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's belief "that it would still be possible to get the Germans to the conference table to discuss the maintenance of world peace after all" (1973, 78).

In his aggressive policy of eastward expansion--the issue that was to cause the World War in Europe--Hitler was playing on old themes. But while these themes had support from some Germans, there was nothing remotely natural or inevitable about the process with which they came to dominate German foreign policy in the 1930s. There were plenty of nonaggressive policies that could also have found resonance in German tradition, and to get his policies adopted Hitler had not only to mislead his own public but to override the objections of some of his most important cronies and co-workers.

## 2. The willingness to use war as a tactic

While there may have been some enthusiasm in Germany for Hitler's policy of expansion to the east, the notion that war should be used to carry out that policy inspired very little support. In Germany, as in the West, there was a great fear of war: as William Manchester has put it, "the German people hated war as passionately as their once and future enemies" (1989, 307). Some people had come to reject war entirely and in principle, while others opposed it because they anticipated huge costs like those suffered in World War I and/or because they felt Germany would lose.

In August 1938, Major Euwald von Kleist-Schmenzin, at considerable personal risk, ventured to Winston Churchill at his home in Britain and urged him to help stop Hitler. "No one in Germany," he argued, "wants war except Hitler" (Manchester 1989, 325). Kleist may have exaggerated, but not, it appears, by much. War fear pervaded both the general public and the elite.

Public opinion. As it happens there is quite a bit of information about German public

opinion during the Nazi era. There were, of course, no public opinion polls, but countless confidential reports on opinion and morale were regularly filed by government, police, and justice officials, by the security service, and by Nazi party agencies. Those ordering the reports demanded objectivity: the leadership "attaches great importance to a detailed, unadorned portrayal of the general public mood;" and "it is expected that the public mood will be presented frankly, without embellishment or propagandistic make-up, i.e. objectively, clearly, reliably, as it is, not as it could or should be" (Steinert 1977, 14). The reports may have had their biases despite admonitions like these, but they do contain plenty of material about opinions that the reporters undoubtedly would prefer not to have heard: increasing criticism of Hitler as the war wore on, substantial contempt for many local Nazi party functionaries throughout the era (Kershaw 1987, 7, 83-104). Moreover, these materials can be augmented with a set of reports about German public opinion in the 1930s that were smuggled out of the country by supporters of the opposition Socialists and compiled by their leaders in exile in Prague, then Paris, then London.

An analysis of this mass of material has led Ian Kershaw to conclude that the German population, like that in other areas of Europe, was "overwhelmingly frightened of the prospect of another war" and approached the prospect of "another conflagration" with "unmistakable dread" (1987, 2, 143).

Unlike in the West, there was no active peace movement--the German version had been abolished and its leaders forced into exile. And there were no formal peace demonstrations--criticism of Hitler in totalitarian Germany was a punishable offense. But nevertheless there occurred in Berlin in 1938 what American journalist William Shirer called in his diary "the most striking demonstration against war I've ever seen." In the midst of the Munich crises a motorized division was purposefully sent off to the Czech frontier at dusk as hundreds of thousands of Berliners were leaving work. Remembering how Berliners on these same streets had sent their troops off to war in 1914 by showering them with cheers and flowers, Shirer was amazed to see that the citizens of 1938 "ducked into the subways, refused to look on, and the handful that did stand at the curb in utter silence unable to find a word of cheer for the flower of their youth going away to the glorious war." Hitler emerged to review the troops from his balcony, but even this failed to draw a crowd: "Hitler looked grim, then angry, and soon went inside, leaving his troops to parade by unreviewed." Shirer concluded that the German people "are dead set against war" (Shirer 1941, 142-43). Hitler reportedly remarked disgustedly, but as it turned out inaccurately, "With these people I cannot make war" (Taylor 1979, 877).

None of this is to deny that the German public found many of Hitler's foreign policy goals attractive. Kershaw observes that "there were affinities between popular aspirations favoring a growth in Germany's national prestige and power, and Hitler's racial-imperialist aims. Expansion of Germany's borders, especially the incorporation of 'ethnic' German territory into the Reich, was massively popular"--but only "as long as it was attained without bloodshed." As the Nazis found, "enthusiasm for war itself and for an apocalyptic struggle for 'living space' was difficult to raise outside circles of nazified youth, the SS, and Party fanatics."<sup>21</sup> Thus "although the overwhelming majority of the population clearly wanted 'national success'--the restoration of Germany's power and glory in Europe--it was just as clearly unwilling to entertain the idea of national sacrifices to attain them, least of all--certainly for the older generation who remembered the suffering of

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<sup>21</sup> Actually, even the fanatics were far from unanimous: a Hitler Youth leader in October 1938 exultantly reported that, in contrast to older people, he and his fellow 16 to 20-year olds were "united behind the Führer" and "prepared to do their utmost" even if it meant war, although even he noted parenthetically and contradictorily that "some were not so enthusiastic" (Kershaw 1987, 134-35).

1914-18--another war" (1987, 229, 122).

Hitler used what Kershaw calls his "particular talent, approaching demagogic genius," to exploit "the deep-seated resentments which the name `Versailles' conjured up. But he consciously, and probably very wisely, refrained from speaking in public and in detail about his own annexationist and imperialist `Lebensraum' aims which went way beyond any revision of the Versailles settlement." He did this not only for diplomatic reasons, but also for domestic ones because to do otherwise would "have heavily burdened the politically unifying emotional desire for restoration of national `honor' and `greatness' with the fear of a new war and the miseries that would bring for the German people" (1987, 122).

Accordingly, in the years before 1933 Nazi propaganda "tended to speak of the future only in the vague sense that a unified Germany would once more become a world power to reckon with, or that Germany would once again gain overseas colonies" (Kershaw 1987, 2n5). And after achieving office Hitler, in virtually every foreign policy speech, declared that his fear and loathing of war was all-consuming. His arguments on this issue were agile and multifaceted. He proclaimed war to be "infinite madness" (1933), a "disaster" (1936), and "an evil" (1938). Amplifying, he argued that it was intolerably costly: "no possible profits could justify the sacrifices and sufferings that war entails" (1935); "the principal effect of every war is to destroy the flower of the nation" (1935); "There is not a single German who desires war. The last war cost us two million dead and seven and a half million wounded. Even if we had been victorious, no victory would have been worth the payment of such a price" (1936). War would be foolishly diverting: "we need [peace] in order to create bread for the millions" (1933); "we have quite enough to do to build up an orderly, just and happy life for our own people" (1935); "most wars arise from the very nature of democracies; we have no need to wage a war abroad in order to be unified at home" (1935); "we want nothing else than to be left in peace; we want the possibility of going on with our work" (1938). War would benefit only Communism: "the unavoidable consequences of a new war in Europe...could but lead to Communistic chaos" (1934). And it would be potentially annihilative: war "would necessarily cause the collapse of the present social and political order" (1933); "Europe is not big enough for a war under modern circumstances....Within an hour...swift bombing machines would wreak ruin upon European capitals" (1935); "I do not believe that Europe can survive such a catastrophe" (1935).

He also used his World War I experience to support his argument: "I know well what war means: I have seen it with my own eyes...I repudiate war" (1933); "Almost all we leaders of the National Socialist Movement were actual combatants. I have yet to meet the combatant who desires a renewal of the horrors of those four and a half years" (1933); "I am myself a front-line soldier and I know how grave a thing war is. I wanted to spare the German people such an evil" (1938); "these years make me in the depths of my being wishful for peace, since I recognize the frightful horrors of war" (1939). And, as noted above, he even used his racism to show his peaceful intentions. For all these reasons, he assured all listeners, "We have declared a hundred times that we wish for peace" (1933); "for years past I have expressed my abhorrence of war and, it is true, also my abhorrence of war-mongers" (1939); "I love peace" (1939) (Hitler 1942, 1046, 1348, 1513, 1198, 1219, 1260, 1079, 1216, 1254, 1545, 1186, 1046, 1215, 1231, 1135, 1105, 1513, 1669, 1085, 1640, 1661).

As Hitler put it late in 1938, "Circumstances have forced me to talk almost exclusively of peace for decades" (Fest 1974, 536). When he launched his invasion of Poland a year later he was careful to fabricate an excuse, explaining "I needed an alibi, especially with the German people, to show them I had done everything to maintain peace" (Manchester 1989, 516). And to a considerable degree, this "necessity" continued during the war. Sensitive, in Kershaw's words,

that "the overriding sentiment" at home "was the desire for an early peace," he continued to stress "his most heartfelt desire for a rapid end to the conflict" even while planning further aggression (1987, 229, 144).

The German people, then, wanted many of the things war had traditionally been used to obtain--revenge for past wrongs, the achievement of national unity and international respect--but they were overwhelmingly opposed to using war to get them. In some respects, this does not differ greatly from the postwar perspectives of the people of West Germany where many have ardently yearned for reunification with East Germany but haven't visualized war as a sensible device for achieving this goal.

Accordingly the German population was immensely cheered, amazed, and relieved in the 1930s when Hitler was able, without firing a shot, to lead them through what Kershaw (1987, 5) aptly characterizes as "a series of unimaginable successes in foreign policy": he renounced the treaty of Versailles, regained the Saarland and the Rhineland in the west, brought Austria into the Reich, annexed the German-speaking Sudetenland section of Czechoslovakia, and in the process reestablished the expanded Germany in a position of prestige, even dominance, in Europe. Supporters in Bavaria deliriously argued that Hitler was clearly greater than Napoleon because he conquered without war (Kershaw 1987, 131). Others reported that the "return of Sudeten Germans into the Reich is greeted everywhere with tremendous joy and the Führer receives heartfelt gratitude for achieving this success without warlike entanglements," and "the public is aware that our Führer's foreign policy represents something unknown in world history insofar as he has succeeded in annexing large territories without shedding blood." They liked to call him "General Bloodless" (Steinert 1977, 39-40). When Hitler in 1939 began to move toward the annexation of the city of Danzig, one official wrote, "Among by far the overwhelming proportion of the population...there is agreement with the solution of the Danzig question only if this proceeds in the same swift and bloodless fashion as the previous annexations in the east....Enthusiasm such as there was in 1914 cannot be reckoned with today" (Kershaw 1987, 142).

Elite opinion. Nor was there any notable enthusiasm for war within the elite. "In 1914," observes D.C. Watt, "a belligerent military urged a reluctant civilian leadership into war, even to the extent of using deceit and misrepresentations to secure the vital orders from the Kaiser, the Austrian Emperor and the Czar. In 1938-9 the reverse was the case. It was the military leadership, whatever its nationality, which dragged its feet....The driving force towards war came from the civilians" (1975, 11).

Two years before World War I, the German General, Helmut von Moltke, had declared, "I believe a war to be unavoidable and: the sooner the better."<sup>22</sup> His successors in Germany a generation later were willing, like their counterparts in the West, to plan for war and to assume that one might eventually emerge somehow. A few in Germany could even imagine that a quick victorious war could bring desirable consequences. And when war did come they fought with remarkable skill and fury. But very few, it seems, held war to be inevitable. And the military leaders were among that near-consensus in Germany which, as Weinberg puts it, "could conceive of another world war only as a repetition of the last great conflict....Inside Germany, most of the military leaders also believed [correctly as it turned out] that another war, if it came, would be most likely to follow such a pattern; this was what made any reluctant to run the risk of a general war which they feared Germany would lose in the end as she has lost the last one" (1980, 18-19).

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<sup>22</sup> Fischer 1975, 162. As James Joll has concluded, "the protagonists in 1914 often felt that they were the victims of objective forces which they could not control" (1984, 203).

Hitler was not in this consensus, and his leadership was necessary to overcome this concern and to bring war to Germany.

To carry out his schemes, Hitler needed to deal both with tactical and strategic objections from the military to his expansionary policies. At the tactical level his intervention was "decisive," Barry Posen argues, in establishing what came to be called Blitzkrieg as a central doctrinal innovation in the German Wehrmacht.

In this Hitler was working with an approach that was already congenial to many soldiers in Germany. As Watt has observed, the basic idea of "sudden, overwhelming attack with the aim of victory as soon as possible" had been "central to German military thinking since the genesis of the Schlieffen Plan" before World War I, and "the idea of making warfare mobile again was one common to all the armed forces of those who signed the Armistice of 1918" (1975, 62). Many--particularly in France--eventually succumbed to defensive strategies. But such thinking was overcome in Germany in the 1920s, and accepted doctrine came, as Gordon Craig reports, to emphasize "the superiority of offensive to defensive strategy." The "whole training programme," he notes, was based "on the assumption that it was strategic mobility that won wars" (Craig 1956, 396-97; see also Posen 1984, 183-86; Quester 1977, chs. 11-12).

Nonetheless, it is one thing to favor the offensive and another to have the capability to carry it out successfully. On balance, Posen concludes, German doctrine of the 1920s "was only an incremental change from that which preceded it." What happened under Hitler was that "an entirely new doctrine to suit new technology" was generated. Since Hitler, in Posen's words, "wanted a good deal more than those who preceded him had wanted," he also "needed a military doctrine very different in detail from that of his predecessors" (1984, 191, 190, 193).

To begin with, Hitler pushed the pace of rearmament much faster than the Army wanted, causing problems of quality and substantially diluting the influence and unifying cohesiveness of the professional officer corps.<sup>23</sup> Then, against substantial organizational resistance from Army traditionalists, he provided "the essential political support," as Posen puts it, for the innovative use of tanks, mechanized assault, and support aircraft that was proposed by Heinz Guderian and that turned out to be the essence of the Blitzkrieg. Without Hitler's intervention, argues Posen, "it seems likely that normal organizational dynamics would have been determinative" and "the German Army would have entered World War II with a much more traditional doctrine." "To the extent that an innovation called 'Blitzkrieg' happened in interwar Germany," Posen concludes, "it was the result of Hitler's intervention" (1984, 211-13, 218)

If Hitler was crucial in getting the German army to adopt the technology and tactics that would make Blitzkrieg possible, he was even more important in developing a strategy that would use this tactic. He agreed with most of his advisors that Germany was unlikely to be able to win a war of attrition from its current base. But unlike them he believed that he could isolate his enemies, taking them on one by one (Weinberg 1980, 19-20). And in particular he also appears to have been utterly unique in his belief that he could intimidate his opponents into standing idly by as he carried off some dramatic conquests.

Accordingly, since "the political/diplomatic use of military force" was an "important element in Hitler's strategy," as Posen observes, his rearmament program was quite a bit different

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<sup>23</sup> Posen 1984, 195; Craig 1956, 483-84; Cooper 1978, 159-66. Craig points out that the expansion sharply increased the number of officers who had undergone Nazi party indoctrination or who were willing to seek a connection with the Nazis "in the interest of self aggrandizement."

from that proposed by the generals. As noted, he demanded quantity at the price of quality: "while the generals sought the `horse-shoe nails' of rearmament--heavy artillery, engineers, railroad troops, and communications--Hitler wanted tanks and planes." That is, "Hitler seems to have believed that the image of armed might was as much an asset as the armed might itself, and ignored important military details for the sake of maximally intimidating appearance" (1984, 194-96). He was particularly successful in this with his most important military opponent, the French, who developed what Weinberg calls "a ridiculously exaggerated view of German military strength" (1980, 243).

That image and Hitler's unique daring contributed importantly to his first major military success--the reoccupation, in March 1936, of the Rhineland that had been demilitarized under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. His forces were substantially outnumbered by the French, but he had concluded that the French and British wouldn't fight over the issue. His military advisers found it "inconceivable" that "Britain and France would not resist such a violation of their foreign policy," and they "feared the worst," as Matthew Cooper has put it.<sup>24</sup> They were proved wrong in their estimates of Western resolve. The military, applying their usual thought processes envisioned only disaster; Hitler's political sense about the opposition proved correct.

Emboldened by this remarkable coup, Hitler next cast his eye covetously upon Austria and Czechoslovakia. Although the top generals liked the idea of incorporating Austria into the Reich, and were not necessarily opposed to destroying Czechoslovakia, they were firmly of the belief that military efforts to do so would be opposed and that this would lead to another general European war. When it was proposed in 1935 that contingency plans he formulated for an attack on Czechoslovakia, the Army's chief of staff, General Ludwig Beck reacted violently, arguing that such an attack would lead to a general war and to Germany's defeat and occupation, and he flatly refused to work on it (Weinberg 1970, 224; Cooper 1978, 51). On June 24, 1937, Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg, Germany's war minister who was a supporter of Nazi influence in the Army and an ardent admirer of Hitler (Weinberg 1980, 44), issued a general directive that professed a position substantially different from Hitler's: "The general political situation justifies the supposition that Germany does not have to reckon on an attack from any side. This is due mainly to the lack of desire for war on the part of all nations, especially the western powers. It is also due to the lack of military preparedness on the part of a number of states, notably Russia. Germany has just as little intention of unleashing a European war. Nonetheless, the international situation, politically unstable and not exclusive of surprising incidents, requires readiness for war on the part of the German Armed Forces, (a) so that attacks from any side may be countered: (b) so that any favorable political opportunities may be militarily exploited" (Cooper 1978, 51). This attitude, concludes Matthew Cooper, "permeated the whole High Command" (1978, 51). This directive, however, did include general deployment plans for wars against Austria and Czechoslovakia. These were opposed by Beck and by the Army commander-in-chief, Werner von Fritsch. Beck remained strongly "opposed to the risk of any war which was likely to become general, and this meant in effect, though not in theory, practically any war started by Germany at all," as Weinberg observes (1980, 33-34).

By that time, however, Hitler had grown, as Berenice Carroll has put it, "certain that his own analysis was correct: Germany would never achieve `world power' with her own economic resources--she must expand them through conquest" (Weinberg 1980, 27-28). Accordingly on November 5, 1937, he held a four-hour meeting with his chief foreign policy and military advisers

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<sup>24</sup> Cooper 1978, 53. One of them described the atmosphere as "like that of a roulette table when a player stakes his future on a single number" (p. 54). See also Weinberg 1970, 262.



(which included Blomberg and Fritsch, but not Beck) to present his strategy for expansion. He had concluded, according to the conference notes, that "the German racial community" now "constituted a tightly packed racial core" which required "a greater living space."<sup>25</sup> Germany's future was "wholly conditional" upon solving this need. The necessary space, he also argued, "can only be sought in Europe," and the space "problem could only be solved by means of force." Hitler repeatedly stressed that this was a risky business, but that if he "was still living, it was his unalterable resolve to solve Germany's problem of space at the latest by 1943-45" because after that date things would begin to "change for the worse" as Germany's potential enemies increased their armaments.

Hitler did not explain exactly how much living space he felt it necessary to seize from his neighbors in Europe, but he did stress that "or first objective, in the event of our being embroiled in war, must be to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria simultaneously in order to remove the threat to our flank in any possible operation against the West."

At the time Hitler anticipated that a war between Italy and France, probably with British participation, was "coming definitely nearer...even as early as 1938." Under cover of this war, Germany could "settle the Czech and Austrian questions"--and the "descent upon the Czechs would have to be carried out with 'lightening speed'."

At this meeting Hitler allowed his subordinates to question him--for the last time, as William Manchester points out (1989, 272). Fritsch and Blomberg strongly and repeatedly argued that France and Britain would fight if Germany started a war in central Europe and that Germany was not militarily ready to stand up to them even if their forces were partly tied down in the war with Italy that Hitler imagined to be imminent. Hitler responded by repeating his conviction that "almost certainly Britain, and probably France as well, had already tacitly written off the Czechs." As he saw it, the "prospect of being once more entangled in a protracted European war were decisive considerations for Britain against participation in a war against Germany" and "an attack by France without British support...was hardly probable."

According to the adjutant who took the notes of the meeting, this difference of opinion "took a very sharp form at times....Every detail of the conduct of Blomberg and Fritsch must have made plain to Hitler that his policies had met with only direct impersonal contradictions, instead of applause and agreement. And he knew very well that both generals were opposed to any warlike entanglement provoked from our side."<sup>26</sup> Within three months Hitler had forced the two men from office. Fritsch was replaced by a Hitler sycophant--Weinberg (1980, 46-47) calls him "an anatomical marvel, a man totally without backbone"--and Hitler took over Blomberg's war ministry himself. The military was now fully under Hitler's personal control. He had eliminated the chief naysayers among the military and had surrounded himself with sycophants: for example, the two men running the Armed Forces Office, Keitel and Jodl, saw the military as a "purely technical executive arm of the Führer," as Weinberg observes, and they believed "no one...had any business giving advice about the wisdom or unwisdom of the orders given" (1980, 32).

Although the Franco-British-Italian war he had visualized never came about, Hitler pushed hard on the questions of Austria and Czechoslovakia in the next months. Although he had achieved full control over the military, there was still enormous apprehension within the military

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<sup>25</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. I. 1954. United States Government Printing Office, pp. 29-38.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper 1978, 56. A few days later Fritsch again met with Hitler. There are no records of this conversation, but it seems likely that Fritsch again forcefully voiced his objections (see O'Neill 1989, 34).

establishment about Hitler's policies, and only he continued to be fully confident that the British and French would not fight for Czechoslovakia. As MacGregor Knox has put it, "the credulous acceptance of the Führer's mission and quasi-supernatural gifts by Keitel and Jodl was not yet general in the officer corps" and Hitler often complained about the "Angst and cowardice in the army" whose officers "as yet did not understand the meaning of the new age" (1984, 50).

In the key political and strategic judgement that the west would not fight for Austria and Czechoslovakia, however, he proved to be astonishingly right and his generals utterly wrong. In fact the British and the French allowed Hitler to annex Austria in March 1938, agreed to turn over to him the German-speaking portions of Czechoslovakia in September 1938, and then watched impotently from afar as he annexed the rest in March 1939. "General Bloodless" had achieved the goals he proposed in his 1937 meeting with Fritsch and Blomberg without having to fire a shot.

The impetus for these momentous events clearly came from Hitler alone. But for present purposes the key issue is whether military leaders might eventually have come to adopt the same policies even if Hitler hadn't been there to manage and manipulate. Perhaps somewhat later, when the generals would have deemed Germany to be better prepared militarily, they would have sought, like their counterparts in 1914, to launch a war on their own.

In this regard two observations by Weinberg about the famous November 5, 1937 meeting are of particular importance. First, he notes that, while Fritsch and Blomberg vigorously objected to Hitler's short term plans, "no one argued at the meeting with his long-term aims." Of course, as Weinberg also points out, Hitler's plans were only disclosed at the meeting "as far as he cared to reveal them," and he was quite vague about any thrusts beyond those upon Austria and Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the implications of a wider war were clearly there. Second, Weinberg notes that the objective of destroying Czechoslovakia, as opposed merely to annexing the German-speaking portions of that country, was "considered appropriate": "in this conference, as in all German internal planning on the Czech question, emphasis was always on the destruction of Czechoslovakia as a state, not on the presence of the Sudeten Germans and their fate" (1980, 35, 39, 41).

The fact that Fritsch and to a lesser extent Blomberg did not voice objections to Hitler's implied long range aims at this conference has been explained by Robert O'Neill on the plausible, but speculative, grounds that "Hitler was not a man to be impressed by moral considerations when an important matter of policy was at stake. If he was to be dissuaded at all from this policy of aggression, military objections were likely to have been far more effective than moral ones" (1989, 34).

It could also be argued that, by objecting to military probes on Austria and particularly on Czechoslovakia, the generals were in effect objecting to Hitler's long-term plans because they were convinced that these probes would trigger a general war for which Germany was as yet ill-prepared. Moreover, as Beck argued after the removal of Fritsch and Blomberg and even as Hitler's sycophants were preparing for a war against the Czechs, "the military-political situation of Germany does not provide the prerequisite condition of space to enable the nation, lying centrally within the continent, to withstand a major war on land, sea and in the air....The very lack of space will make it impossible for Germany to endure a long war successfully." Moreover, "Germany's defense economy is poor, poorer than in 1917-18" (O'Neill 1989, 35-36). Also highly relevant, was the state of public opinion, as Beck had pointed out earlier: "Today an anxious disquietude affects the masses; they fear war;...they see no justifiable grounds for war" (Craig 1956, 488). All these considerations were important, Beck concluded in 1938, because "the hope to solve the Czechoslovakian problem this year without the intervention of Britain and France is

groundless...[Britain] will never give us a free hand against Czechoslovakia" (O'Neill 1989, 36).

But it could still be maintained that the generals were principally objecting to Hitler's risky adventures because they felt Germany was not ready for a war at that time. Since they seem to have had little objection to the basic policy of expansion, including the incorporation of Austria into the Reich and the destruction of Czechoslovakia, it is possible to imagine, in addition, that even without Hitler's lead they would have come at least to look with substantial favor upon using force or the threat of it to rectify the Polish border and to regain the free city of Danzig.<sup>27</sup> Of course, unlike Hitler, the west might have been able to satiate such desires. As noted earlier, the west proved willing to hand over to Germany without a fight much of the territory it most ardently desired. It acquiesced in the acquisition of Austria and the destruction of Czechoslovakia, and it stood ready to make a peaceful deal on Danzig and the Polish border. To achieve war the generals, like Hitler, would have had to want to push much harder, farther, and faster.

However, even if we assume that the generals would on their own have come to lust after Hitlerian territorial goals in the area, it seems unlikely that they would have embarked upon a major war to achieve these goals for at least three reasons.

First, Germany probably would never have been ready for war as the German generals defined it. The west, rather belatedly, had begun to respond to the German arms buildup and was rapidly outfitting itself with planes and tanks that were of newer and superior design to those of the Germans. As Hitler pointed out in November 1937, Germany's military forces had nearly completed their expansion and modernization. By that time, however, "the world was expecting or attack and was increasing its countermeasures from year to year," and therefore Germany's "relative strength would decrease in relation to the rearmament...carried out by the rest of the world."<sup>28</sup> Since the military leaders were convinced in 1937 and 1938 that Germany was unable to fight a general war, they were unlikely to revise this view as time wore on and the arms race began to shift in favor the west. Moreover, insofar as they felt they needed broad popular support to perpetrate a war, the evidence strongly suggests they were extremely unlikely to get it.

Second, it seems very difficult to find any German military leader who generally wanted war. It was part of the general's business to consider war and to plan for it, and some could perhaps see some advantage in a quick, successful war. But unlike their war-eager pre-1914 counterparts who mainly anticipated that the next war would be brief, decisive, and even redemptive, the German generals of the late 1930s, like their counterparts in the west, almost invariably anticipated, and feared, a repetition of World War I. They were, as many have called them, reluctant warriors.

Finally, to achieve war, a German military leader would have also had to be, like Hitler, something of a political wizard. But, as Cooper points out, "none of the military leaders of those critical years from 1933 to 1938 possessed any political ability."<sup>29</sup>

German militarism. It seems to me, then, that there was little--very little--willingness for war in Germany in the interwar period outside the mental processes of one man, Adolf Hitler. Few even in the Nazi party revelled in the thought of war, while public and elite opinion, including

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<sup>27</sup> According to some postwar testimony there were "many staff officers who regarded a war against Poland to regain the Corridor as inevitable and desirable" even before Hitler came to power (Craig 1956, 441).

<sup>28</sup> On this "by no means unreasonable prediction," see Weinberg 1980, 37n66.

<sup>29</sup> 1978, p. 26. Cooper suggests Walther von Reichenau as a "possible exception."

that of the military chiefs, basically viewed the prospect of another war with horror and trepidation.

But Gerhard Weinberger's caveat on this issue bears consideration: "Certainly the terrible cost of the war had left many Germans disillusioned with war and fearful of its repetition. but it should be noted that the disillusionment in Germany was not quite like that in Western countries. There were books expressing such sentiments as characterized Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front in other countries than Germany, but one would find it exceedingly difficult to match outside Germany the literature glorifying war that was typified by the works of Ernst Jünger and was applied to the postwar period by members of the "Free Corps" (1970, 22-23; see also Wette 1985).

That a degree of militarism persisted in Germany after the Great War is suggested not only by the quasi-military movements of the 1920s, like the street fighters of the Free Corps, and by the popularity of the novels of Jünger, but also by the generally militaristic form taken in the ritual and organization of the Nazi party and its ancillary organizations like the Hitler Youth. While Hitler may have been giving speeches about peace in the 1930s, these were sometimes incongruously being delivered to regimented audiences decked out in full military uniform. The words were about peace, but the context of their delivery, at least in retrospect, often suggested something else.

More pre-1914-style militarism may have persisted in Germany than in other countries, and this is clearly something Hitler could build on. But it seems unlikely that this residual militarism could have somehow brought about another war without Hitler's agile and determined entrepreneurship.

To begin with, as Alfred Vagts points out in his A History of Militarism, the militarism that persisted in Germany was not of the kind that had brought war in the past.

Vagts defines "militarism" as "a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes." "It may permeate all society," he observes, and it "displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief." Militarism does not lead inevitably to war, but insofar as it is connected, it had hitherto required the active war-eagerness of the military itself: "Most wars up to 1939 had been welcomed by impatient warriors; they had been wanted chiefly by the armed forces, by commanders and staffs down to ambitious subalterns" (1959, 14, 452).

In the 1930s, this mechanism can be seen in action in only one place: "the one remaining stronghold of old-style great power militarism was Japan," where "officers staged those `incidents' which other armies and navies had learned to shun." As pointed out earlier, this connection between militarism and the military itself no longer existed in Germany. In Vagt's words, "traditional militarism as is indicated by the activities of political-minded officers, by their hankering for and provocation of war, was distinctly lessening. Sheer professionalism was the dominant attitude.... German generals on the whole behaved like the most obedient and at times almost passionate professionals," The German army, he concludes, "actually never was quite ready for Hitler's kind of war" (1959, 477, 451).

In the Nazi era, Germany had what Vagts calls "civilian militarism," and he also finds it in Italy, Poland, the Soviet Union, and even a bit in France (1959, chs. 12-13). The old-style military militarism can rather naturally lead to war--the forces that want war are also those with the weapons. But the new civilian version cannot--the civilian leadership must mobilize the reluctant military to bring about a war, something that happened in Germany and Italy, but not in the Soviet Union or Poland. In Germany someone other than Hitler might have been able to pull this off, but

the point here is that the form of militarism that Germany possessed in the 1930s was not the kind that tends, of itself, to lead to war.

Moreover, militaristic show has a wide, nearly universal, appeal, and it does not necessarily imply warfare. After all, the putting on of uniforms and fancy braid, the parading of military gear, the waving of flags, and the staging of mass spectacles was, and is, found almost everywhere--from boy scout campouts to Fourth-of-July commemorations to Ku Klux Klan or Shriner rituals to May Day celebrations to Olympics ceremonies. The Nazi version looks ominous to us today because we know what it all came to. A few observers at the time did find it disconcerting, but many concluded that this was simply the way the Germans were re-establishing a sense of community, honor, self-respect, and national pride after the devastations of a great war and a severely troubled aftermath--and to a considerable extent that was exactly what the militaristic ritual was all about.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, much of what passed for militarism in Germany was pretty shallow. The vast majority of World War I veterans, as Robert Waite points out, went into quiet civilian pursuits, not into the Free Corps (1952, 29). For most of its first dozen years, the Nazi party was a laughable fringe group. While the vivid, somewhat Ramboesque novels of Ernst Jünger may have been popular, it was Remarque's 1929 anti-war novel, All Quiet on the Western Front, that sold well over two million copies in Germany to become the top bestseller in the history of German literature.<sup>31</sup> And, as indicated earlier, for all their oratory and ritual, for all their fulminations and parades, for all their flag-waving and ceremonies, Hitler and his Nazis were never able to get the German people to view war with anything other than horror and foreboding. It was the peace talk of their "General Bloodless" that the people most welcomed. Militarism was not impelling Germany toward war in the 1930s. Hitler was.

The impact of the arms race. Nor, it seems, was the arms race likely, by itself, to propel the continent into war. Rearmament was generally popular in Germany, and the military, of course, was particularly pleased with it--indeed, well before Hitler the country had covertly been rearming, sometimes with the unlikely aid of Soviet Russia. The impetus for rearmament came from two sources: military leaders wanted to regain lost prestige, and many people--within the military and without--saw it as a device whereby Germany's shattered honor and status within Europe could be restored.

In the aftermath of World War I, as an army officer recalled, "the officers, up to then the most respected class, fell lower in the public estimation than any paper on the Exchange" (Vagts 1959, 411). Army chief Hans von Seeckt set about trying to rectify this: "the army and its leaders must be assured of their rightful position in public life and be protected against attacks," he proclaimed in 1928 (Craig 1956, 388). Hitler, keenly aware both of this desire and of the crucial need he would eventually have for the military to carry out his broader plans, successfully "restored the officers to that ancient accustomed place, even above the large majority of the dignitaries of his own party," as Vagts observes (1959, 411). The military also welcomed Hitler's military expansion, though its rapidity eventually served, as Craig points out, "to destroy the cohesiveness of the officer corps" which then placed Hitler "in an excellent position to assert lies absolute dominance over the army and to purge it of unbelievers whenever he decided it was

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<sup>30</sup> On the relation of the uniforms to a sense of honor in Germany, see Vagts 1959, 444.

<sup>31</sup> Owen 1984, 81-97. A survey among 2600 male youths as late as 1932 found it still to be the most widely read book (p. 98).

expedient to do so" (1956, 484).

Similarly, many in the German population still believed in the old notion that a nation's importance and prestige were measured by the size of its armed forces, and there was a substantial desire to avoid a repetition of the humiliation visited upon the nation when the French almost casually reoccupied portions of an important Germany in 1923 to enforce reparations payments.

For all these reasons, rearmament was popular with many segments within Germany. But weapons do not bring about war; people with ideas do.

The standard mechanism by which arms races are alleged to cause, lead to, or trigger wars involves a "window of opportunity": in a competitive situation, one country lashes out while it holds a temporary advantage over its opponent. As Ned Lebow (1984) has pointed out in a study of three well-known windows of opportunity, countries do not casually or automatically jump through them. In the present case, however, it could be argued that Hitler was indeed anxious to exploit such an opportunity. But, as noted earlier, he was the only one who came to this conclusion. If he was correct that the window of opportunity would soon begin to close--and it appears that he was--arms race theory would suggest that the dangers of war would gradually diminish as the arms of the enemy began more nearly to balance Germany's. Accordingly as time wore on, the German incentive to launch a war would lessen. Far from encouraging Hitlers to emerge, considerations about the military balance would deflate any latent war spirit in others.

### 3. Hitler's personality and leadership skills

Although Hitler could be laughable with his cartoonish posturings and Chaplinesque moustache, to stress these would be to continue the underestimations that helped to entrap and mislead his contemporaries. It seems clear that Hitler possessed exceptional qualities as a leader. Norman Rich stresses his enormous energy and stamina, an exceptional capacity to persuade, an excellent memory, strong powers of concentration, an overwhelming craving for power, a fanatical belief in his mission, a monumental self-confidence, a unique daring, a spectacular facility for lying, a mesmerizing oratorical style, and an ability to be utterly ruthless to anyone who got in his way or attempted to divert him from his intended course of action (1973, xxxvi-xxxix). Analysts like Rich (1973, xxxii), Alan Bullock (1952, 735), and Hugh Trevor-Roper (1953, vii) consider him as "a political genius."

There was simply no one else around who had these blends of capacities. Most of the other top German leaders were toadies or sycophants, and certainly none could remotely arouse the blind adulation and worship Hitler inspired. As Rich puts it, "The point cannot be stressed too strongly; Hitler was master of the Third Reich" (1973, 11). Or, in Fest's words, "From the first party battle in the summer of 1921 to the last few days of April, 1945...Hitler held a wholly unchallenged position; he would not even allow any principle, any doctrine, to hold sway, but only his own dictates" (1974, 8). With respect to foreign policy, in particular, Hitler was clearly dominant: there seems to be little reason to doubt, in Smith's words, "the dominance of Hitler over the foreign policy aspects of the Nazi program and over the making of German foreign policy under the Nazi regime." Moreover, "Hitler's long-range view of foreign policy, full of delusions and contradictions through it was, constituted the basis on which the most crucial decisions on foreign relations were made in Germany from 1933 to 1945" (1986, 238). "Despite what has been called the 'pluralism' of foreign policy conceptions inside the Nazi state," concludes Geoffrey Stoakes, "the chief author of policy remained Hitler....Nazi diplomacy, whilst by no means impervious to 'structural' pressures from within Germany and from outside, was largely determined by Hitler's convictions about Bolshevism and the pursuit of living-space in the East"

(1986, 238-39).

As Weinberg suggests, Hitler was "the one man able, willing, and even eager to lead Germany and drag the world into war" (1980, 664). And Hitler was well aware of this. As he told his generals in 1939, "essentially all depends on me, on my existence, because of my political talents." He was, he boasted, "irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me" (Mueller 1989, 68).

### Implications

Clearly, if, against all odds, history's greatest cataclysm came about only because one spectacularly skilled, lucky, and determined man willed it into existence, this circumstance has substantial implications. Some tentative suggestions are sketched below.

1. There has often been a sense that World War II grew somewhat inevitably out of the depression of the 1930s, and some scenarios for a future global conflicts envision a world-wide depression that hits Japan hard and brings out a dormant militarism in that country and impels the country to lash out desperately. The history of Europe in the 1930s does not seem to support that sort of mechanistic connection between economic crisis and war. The depression may have helped Hitler to gain office in Germany, but war came only after he had apparently pulled the country out of the depression and felt economically comfortable. If, in addition, the war came about only because of Hitler's peculiar machinations, the connection is made even more remote and indirect.

2. The Second World War in Europe is sometimes called a continuation of World War I, but it was in no sense inevitable. In many respects, World War I can be seen as a sort of "natural" war: it was in the cards and likely to emerge out of the various conflicts of the war-anticipating contestants. By contrast, World War II had to be willed into existence by a lucky and highly skilled entrepreneur facing gullible and uncomprehending opponents.

3. The war in Europe did not emerge out of the militarism of German society or character. The Germans were unhappy about the way their country was treated after the First World War, but like their successors after 1945, they were not notably anxious to use major war to rectify their grievances.

4. Without Hitler the great war of 1914-1918 might have lived up to its billing as the war to end wars--at least wars of that type--and we might now be celebrating an astoundingly long period of peace in Europe.

5. Appeasement has gained an undeservedly bad reputation. The appeasers like Neville Chamberlain almost had it right, and their strategy might well have worked with any other German leader and averted war. The key issue, as Chamberlain put it at the time of Munich, was whether "the object of [Hitler's] policy was racial unity" or "the domination of Europe." On this, he guessed wrong even as Churchill guessed right. But Chamberlain's efforts were not at all unreasonable, particularly given Hitler's consummate abilities as a liar.

6. The 1920s and 1930s were not peculiarly unstable. As in any era there were plenty of grievances, and in the 1930s there was, in addition, a particularly strong economic setback. But these problems could have been weathered in time. The terrible war that emerged after those decades was not a natural consequence of their character, but rather the result of one man's peculiarly successful machinations.

7. The Weimar Republic and the oft-chronicled (and exaggerated) bawdiness of Germany

during that period were not exceptionally disgraceful, and they were not important causes of World War II. The democracy of Weimar was probably no less admirable and perhaps no less viable than that of the Fourth French Republic. If a consolidator leader like De Gaulle, rather than a fanatical aggressor like Hitler, had come along to put things back into order, it would have been seen merely as a growing period for German democracy.

8. Despite the conclusions of many postwar thinkers, including George Orwell in his 1984, totalitarianism neither requires war to function, nor does it necessarily lead to war. But for Hitler's maniacal expansionary zeal and extreme willingness to accept risk, totalitarian Nazi Germany would not have gone to war (and might, in consequence, still be there in the center of Europe today in some form or other).

9. Containment may have been a misapplied strategy, particularly in many of its military aspects. Many of its creators, traumatized by the Hitler experience, assumed that the totalitarian Soviet Union might very well follow the steps of totalitarian Nazi Germany and, if appeased, eventually launch a major war. This fear was probably greatly exaggerated--though, of course, if the containment theorists erred, they erred on the safe side.

10. The "great man" theory of history of Thomas Carlyle and others has been substantially discredited, and today, as Fest observes, we tend to "ascribe little importance to personality compared with the interests, relationships, and material conflicts within the society." However, in the case of Hitler, "an individual once again demonstrated the stupendous power of a solitary person over the historical process...He made history with a highhandedness that even in his own days seemed anachronistic" (1974, 5-8). The Hitler experience suggests that the importance of key individuals (in this case, great monsters) in shaping history should not be so readily discounted.

11. It seems likely that the man called William Shakespeare actually wrote the plays attributed to him. The many people over the centuries who have tried to discredit Shakespeare (the Stratford man, as they often call him) have been impelled by information of his poor education and inadequate upbringing. Hitler rose almost literally from the gutter to a position where he virtually single-handedly instigated and shaped some of history's greatest and most horrible events. If we knew as little about his background, about his innate skills, and about his ability to develop as we know about Shakespeare's, many people would today be discounting his importance and visualizing him as a convenient mouthpiece for backroom manipulators.

## 7. Polarity, stability, and system-transformation in the wake the Cold War

The demise of the Cold War makes it possible to test two prominent explanatory models for the Cold War. One of these, the classic Cold War model, stresses ideas: it argues that the Cold War and the bipolar structure of postwar international politics sprang from an ideological conflict. The other seeks to minimize the impact of ideas as a determining variable: it argues that the contest and the structure emerged from the way military, economic, and political capabilities were distributed after World War II.

1. The classic Cold War model observes that when the Soviet Union was formed in 1917 it took on as one of its essential beliefs the notion that international capitalism, or imperialism, was a profoundly evil system that must be eradicated from the face of the globe by violence. The role of the Soviet Union in this enterprise, declared Josef Stalin, was to serve as a "base for the overthrow of imperialism in all countries" or as a "lever for the further disintegration of imperialism." He concluded that "The struggle between these two centers for the possession of



the world economy will decide the fate of capitalism and Communism in the whole world," and he would often quote Lenin on such matters: "the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. In the end either one or the other will conquer." Meanwhile, the official Party history proclaimed its "confidence in the final victory of the great cause of the party of Lenin and Stalin, the victory of Communism in the whole world" (Historicus 1949, 198, 200, 203-4). Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev kept the faith in 1961: "The victory of socialism on a world scale, inevitable by virtue of the laws of history, is no longer far off." And he defined what he called "peaceful coexistence" as "a form of intense economic, political and ideological struggle between the proletariat and the aggressive forces of imperialism in the world arena" (Hudson 1961, 214).<sup>32</sup>

Any country designated "imperialist" by the Soviets would naturally tend to find such pronouncements threatening, particularly after they had been hurled thousands--perhaps millions--of times. From this contest, according to the classic interpretation, has stemmed the postwar Cold War between East and West. Advocates of the classic Cold War model would subscribe to John Lewis Gaddis' observation: "Moscow's commitment to the overthrow of capitalism throughout the world had been the chief unsettling element in its relations with the West since the Russian revolution" (1974, 388).<sup>33</sup>

The Soviet threat was particularly unsettling to the West after World War II because it was backed up by an exceptional military capacity. However, while this capacity may have concentrated the imperialist mind, it did not determine the essential shape of the contest. A Soviet Union that was militarily less capable might have been less worrisome, but, like Khomeini's Iran in the 1980s (or for that matter like the Soviet Union of the 1930s), it would still have been seen to be an opponent.

Nor, according to this approach, was it disgust with the Soviet domestic system that impelled the Cold War. The West and the USSR had worked productively together as allies during World War II, and many in the West, including Franklin Roosevelt and the designers of the United Nations, were willing to do their best to continue that cooperation in the postwar era. As the quintessential Cold Warrior, John Foster Dulles, once put it, "The basic change we need to look forward to isn't necessarily a change from Communism to another form of government. The question is whether you can have Communism in one country or whether it has to be for the world. If the Soviets had national Communism we could do business with their government" (Gaddis 1982, 143). Western democracies in fact were able to come to terms and even ally with countries whose domestic systems they deemed reprehensible: Spain and Portugal, for example.

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<sup>32</sup> In his memoirs, Khrushchev puts it this way: "Both history and the future are on the side of the proletariat's ultimate victory....We Communists must hasten this process....There's a battle going on in the world to decide who will prevail over whom....To speak of ideological compromise would be to betray our Party's first principles" (1974, 530-31); and "peaceful coexistence among different systems of government is possible, but peace coexistence among different ideologies is not" (1970, 512).

<sup>33</sup> A recent analysis puts it this way: "The prime cause of the conflict opening up between the Russians and the Americans (and their allies) was the ideology of the Soviet leaders, and their consequent incapacity, rather than their reluctance, to make permanent arrangements with the leaders of capitalist states. This was stated by Maxim Litvinov in June 1946, in one of those strange, candid remarks of his: the 'root cause' of the trouble was 'the ideological conception prevailing here that conflict between communist and capitalist worlds is inevitable'. When asked what would happen if the West were to concede to Russia all her aims in foreign policy, Litvinov replied: 'It would lead to the West being faced, in a more or less short time, with the next series of demands'" (Thomas 1987, 548). See also Gaddis 1987, ch. 2.

2. In the widely discussed approach to international politics called "realism," "structural realism," or "neorealism," domestic ideological aspects are played down. What chiefly makes the system tick, according to such influential formulators as Kenneth Waltz, is the "distribution of capabilities." States differ in their capabilities and from these differences springs the structure (1979, 98).

In this approach, a country's capability includes its "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence" (Waltz 1979, 131). In the postwar period two countries have been far more "capable" than any others by these more or less objective measures, and from this condition, concludes Waltz, stems the essential conflict: "the United States is the obsessing danger for the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union for the United States, since each can damage the other to an extent no other state can match" (Waltz 1979, 170). The Cold War between them, therefore, "is firmly rooted in the structure of postwar international politics, and will last as long as that structure endures" (Waltz 1988, 628).

Polarity. Both models characterize the postwar world as "bipolar." One sees this as a consequence of the distribution of capabilities, while the other argues that the bipolarity has been a consequence of ideology.

As will be seen, the changes in the Cold War in the 1980s have put these models to their greatest test; but problems with the structural realist approach could have been evident even earlier. For example, consider the following modest thought experiment. Suppose Stalin's Communist regime had been deposed in 1945 by one dominated by someone with the views of Winston Churchill, Thomas Jefferson, Mahatma Gandhi, Alexander Kerensky, or, for that matter, Mikhail Gorbachev. Suppose, in addition, that this hypothetical country would have been just as capable as Stalin's--that is, equally big, well-endowed, militarily strong, politically stable and competent. Although it could have damaged the West just as effectively as Stalin's Soviet Union, it seems to me that this imaginary country would not have been seen to pose such an obsessing danger or that postwar international politics would have taken anything resembling the oppositional, bipolar course it did.<sup>34</sup> It is entirely possible, in fact, that the United States and a liberal Moscow regime would have joined with Britain and other important democracies to form a consortium to deal jointly with world problems, including a settlement in Europe.

Capabilities seem hardly to have been the chief causative factor in the other major contest of the Cold War era either--the mutual hostility and fear that flourished between the United States and China from the late 1940s into the 1970s. During that period China was far less capable of damaging the United States than the nuclear-armed Britain, yet Britain was an ally and China an enemy. Conversely, if Britain had become Communist in, say, 1965, it would have suddenly become an obsessing danger to the US that would have rivaled or surpassed any posed by the Chinese. Ideas and ideology seem chiefly responsible for the dynamic, not capabilities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Actually, as Carl Kaysen has suggested, since the arms race was importantly impelled by the ideological conflict, an ideologically-harmonious US and USSR would probably not have emerged so vastly superior to other countries in military terms.

<sup>35</sup> The split that occurred between the Soviet Union and China in the late 1950s and the early 1960s seems also to have been determined far more by a dispute over ideas and ideology than by differences in capability or other power political considerations. From an economic or military perspective, the split made no objective sense, especially for China which lost economic aid and trade as well as military protection. For a discussion, see Mueller 1989, 133-51, 163-65.

The real test, however, came in the 1980s. There was little change in the capability indices proposed by Waltz: the Soviet Union did not become any smaller; its resource endowment remained the same; however troubled, it continued to have one of the largest economies in the world; its massive military and nuclear strength remained very much in place; and, while shakier than in the past, it continued (until late 1989 or 1990 at least) to be politically stable and competent. Although there was some catching up in the economic sphere by Japan and by the states of West Europe, the US and the USSR remained far more "capable" by these criteria than any other countries in the world. In the key area of military capacity in particular, the two countries continued (and continue) to maintain a military and nuclear capacity that dwarfed any conceivable rival. If, as Waltz suggests, the Cold War is "firmly rooted" in a structure determined by the distribution of capabilities, each side should continue to be "bound to focus its fears on the other, to distrust its motives, and to impute offensive intention to defensive measures" (1988, 628).

At the same time, however, there was an important change in ideas: the Soviet Union abandoned its threateningly expansionary ideology. Its love affair with revolution in the advanced capitalist world, frustrated for decades, ceased to have even theological relevance, and its venerable and once-visceral attachment to revolution and to "wars of national liberation" in the Third World no longer even inspired much in the way of lip service. As Francis Fukuyama has observed, "the role of ideology in defining Soviet foreign policy objectives and in providing political instruments for expansion has been steadily declining in the postwar period" and Gorbachev "further accelerated that decline" (1987, 12). In 1985 Gorbachev said his country required "not only a reliable peace, but also a quiet, normal international situation" (Colton 1986, 191). By 1988, the Soviets were admitting the "inadequacy of the thesis that peaceful coexistence is a form of class struggle," and began to refer to the "world socialist system" or the "socialist community of nations" rather than to the "socialist camp." And, in a major speech in December 1988, Gorbachev specifically called for "de-ideologizing relations among states" and, while referring to the Communist revolution in Russia as "a most precious spiritual heritage," proclaimed that "today we face a different world, from which we must seek a different road to the future."

With this change in ideology--which took place before the disintegration of the Soviet empire in East Europe and before the structural changes within the Soviet Union itself--the structure of world politics changed profoundly: the Cold War and bipolarity evaporated. The New York Times proclaimed on April 2, 1989 that the Cold War was over, and later in the year even staunchly anti-Communist commentators were agreeing: the Cold War is indeed "coming to an end....The Soviet leaders have for all intents and purposes given up the ideological struggle....[and they] have retreated from the basic doctrine of international class struggle--the doctrine that gave rise to the cold war in the first place" (Harries 1989, 40).

Far from emphasizing bipolarity and far from continuing to "focus its fears" on the United States, the USSR as early as 1987 was proposing that the United States and the Soviet Union join together in an international consortium along the lines envisioned a half-century earlier in the United Nations Charter. It is even possible that the US and the USSR could again become allies as they were during World War II. In his last presidential press conference (long before the changes in East Europe), Ronald Reagan was specifically asked about this, and, stressing the ideological nature of the contest, he responded essentially in the affirmative: "If it can be definitely established that they no longer are following the expansionary policy that was instituted in the Communist revolution, that their goal must be a one-world Communist state...[then] they might want to join the family of nations and join them with the idea of bringing about or establishing

peace."<sup>36</sup> Six months later (but still before the East European changes) his successor, George Bush, was urging, without Reagan's tentativeness, that Western policy should move "beyond containment" and seek to "integrate the Soviet Union into the community of nations." An "evil empire" no more.

Thus it seems that the demise of the Cold War has chiefly been caused by changes in ideas. Material factors have certainly helped to bring these changes about--clearly the failure of the Soviet economic and administrative system helped to impel Gorbachev and others to reexamine their basic ideology. But it was the change in ideology that was crucial. Suppose that persistent material failure had caused the Soviet Union to lapse into steady Ottoman-like decline but that its ideological quest to overthrow international capitalism had continued unabated: suppose, in other words, that it took on the characteristics of China in the 1950s or 1960s or of the Soviet Union in the 1920s or 1930s. The West might have become somewhat less concerned that a major war would develop from the contest, but its hostility would have continued and the Cold War would have prospered. On the other hand, suppose the Soviet Union had not lapsed into material stagnation or decline, but that its leaders had undergone an ideological conversion to democratic liberalism or for that matter to Burma-style isolation and xenophobia. In that case the Cold War would have abated.

It is not clear what one would call the arrangement that seems to be emerging after this remarkable transformation: unipolar or universal international, perhaps, or unipolar or nonpolar or macropolar or multipolar or micropolar. But it would be difficult to call it bipolar, and the transformation would come about because of an important change in attitude, in ideas, not because of a major change in the distribution of capabilities.

Stability. The transformation also suggests that the concept of stability might profitably be reexamined. A system is determined to be stable, in Waltz's formulation, not because war is avoided but rather because "no consequential variation takes place in the number of principal parties that constitute the system" (1979, 162). Bipolarity is more stable than multipolarity, he argues, because it allows for less uncertainty between the major players and because it has been enforced by nuclear fears (1979, ch. 8; 1988).

If ideology has been the dominant force determining the structure of postwar international politics, however, the system has been quite unstable by Waltz's definition. While the distribution of capabilities and therefore the placement of a country in Waltz's international system cannot change very fast, its ideology can alter quickly when new leaders take charge or when old ones change their mindsets. Something like this happened after 1948 when the once-ideological leaders of Yugoslavia, excommunicated by Stalin from the international Communist movement, abandoned their shrill commitment to worldwide revolution. They were soon embraced by their capitalist ex-enemies, and for a while Yugoslavia was close to becoming an informal participant in NATO (Campbell 1967, 24-27).

System transformation. It appears that we have undergone something like the functional equivalent of a system-transforming or hegemonic war. For Organski and Kugler these wars are started by countries which seek to "redraft the rules by which relations among nations work" (1980, 23). For Robert Gilpin such wars historically have been "the basic mechanism of systemic

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<sup>36</sup> New York Times, December 9, 1988, A18. Notably, Reagan tied this development to an end of the Soviet expansionary threat, not to reform of its domestic system. On the possibility of East/West alliance, see Mueller 1989-90.

change in world politics" (1981, 209). They reorder "the basic components of the system," "reestablish an unambiguous hierarchy of prestige," and determine "who will govern the international system and whose interests will be primarily served by the new international order." They lead "to a redistribution of territory among the states in the system, a new set of rules of the system, a revised international division of labor etc." As a result, "a relatively more stable international order and effective governance of the international system are created based on the new realities of the international distribution of power" (1981, 198).<sup>37</sup>

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita has argued that even very small wars, such as the Seven Weeks War of 1866, can have such an effect (1990). The lessons of the 1980s seem to suggest that, in fact, no war is required at all: the system can be transformed by a mere change of ideas. After the Soviets abandoned their threateningly expansionary ideology, the patterns by which international relations function soon changed substantially. As noted earlier, there have been important territorial readjustments (especially in Europe), a splinting of alliances, a reordering of prestige and status rankings, a new set of rules and conventions, a revised division of labor, new procedures for managing the international system, and even something of a negative arms race.

The change seems to have been from what Morton Kaplan calls a "loose bipolar system" to (or toward) a "universal international system." In the former, according to Kaplan's rules, the blocs seek to "eliminate the rival bloc," to "increase their capabilities in relation to those of the rival bloc," to fight "rather than to permit the rival bloc to attain a position of preponderant strength," and to "attempt to extend the membership of their bloc." In the latter, countries "use peaceful means to obtain their objectives," "do not resort to force or the threat of force," and "attempt to increase the resources and productive base of the international system" (1957, 38, 47).

Essentially, it's a change from a zero-sum situation to a positive-sum one. That this happened when the Soviets abandoned their confrontational ideology was suggested by an important Soviet official in 1987: "Previously we reasoned: the worse for the adversary, the better for us....But today this is no longer true....The better things are going in the European world economy, the higher the stability and the better the prospects for our development" (Snyder 1987/88, 115).

## 8. Recasting "power" and "anarchy"

As the change in ideas has brought about the demise of the Cold War, that demise is in turn helping to recast other important international ideas--some of which have actually been in the process of change for decades or even centuries. In particular, because of the way nations are beginning to shape their ideas about international affairs, it may now be time to consider retiring--or at least substantially recasting--two concepts that have been central to much international relations theorizing, "power" and "anarchy."

Power. The concept of power has been at the center of a great deal of theorizing about international affairs particularly after Hans J. Morgenthau grandly declared in 1948 that "international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power" (1948, 13). Morgenthau defines "power" as "man's control over the minds and actions of others" (1948, 13), while Waltz offers

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<sup>37</sup> For Waltz the system can be changed by major war, it seems, or, in the bipolar case, if one country should somehow succeed in establishing hegemony or manage to "enlarge the circle of great powers by promoting the amalgamation of some of the middle states" like those in West Europe (1979, 199). See also Gilpin 1981, 242-44.

"the old and simple notion that an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him" (1979, 192). Words exist in the English language which more closely and less ambiguously approach what these definitions seem to suggest: influence, control, status, prestige, importance. Since these words are more precise, they ought to be preferable: the word, "power," is not needed (see also Riker 1964).

More importantly, in the international context the word compellingly tends to imply military strength. Morgenthau and Waltz make the connection quite explicit. "The dependence of national power upon military preparedness," declares Morgenthau, "is too obvious to need much elaboration" (1948, 183). Because of the "weight" of American "capabilities," observes Waltz, "American actions have tremendous impact" (1979, 192). The notion that a disarmed country could possess great "power" is all but inconceivable under these patterns of thought.

Yet, if "power" essentially means "influence" or "status," contemporary Japan has become just such a state. It happens at present to have rather substantial "self-defense forces," but it is not respect for these forces which gives Japan weight in world affairs or allows it to "set the scene of action for others," in Waltz's expression (1979, 72). If power in the sense of influence, control, status, prestige, or importance can be achieved without military capability or preparedness, the word has become misleading or misdirecting at best.

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly questionable whether it is wise to place the concept of power--however defined--at the center of any construct that tries to deal with international affairs. There have always been problems with this notion. If all politics is a "struggle for power" or if nations are consumed by a "lust for power," the international behavior of the United States for much of its history defies description. In the period before World War I, and indeed for much of the twenty-year period after it, the United States hardly seems to have been the very model of a modern major power-seeker if that means struggling lustfully for influence in the councils of the big people. In that sense, the United States often adopted a strategy that could best be characterized as power-averse.

In the present post-Cold War era, we may well be moving toward a situation in which classic notions about "power" are becoming remarkably anachronistic. In War and Peace in 1869, Leo Tolstoy observed that "All historians agree that the external activity of states and nations in their conflicts with one another is expressed in wars, and that as a direct result of greater or less success in war the political strength of states and nations increases or decreases" (1966, 1145). Today Japan and Germany, the big losers in the last war, enjoy great "political strength." As Paul Schroeder (1990) has put it, "Not only may conditions change; collective mentalities may also."

This does not mean that conflict will vanish, but only that war will not be used by important developed countries to resolve their conflicts. For example, the US and Japan once had a dispute over who should run the territory of Okinawa--exactly the sort of argument that has often led to war in the past. The issue was resolved without war or the threat of it: a deal was cut. Similar discussions are going on now about the four little northern islands the Japanese feel were unjustly taken from them by the Soviets in 1945.

In fact, to push this point perhaps to an extreme, if we are entering an era in which economic motivations became paramount and in which military force is not accepted as a method for pursuing wealth, not only would "power" with all its military implications become obsolete, but so would "power" in the sense of influence or status. In principle, pure economic actors do not care about influence or prestige. They care about getting rich. Admittedly, as Japan has found, influence, status, and prestige tend to accompany the accumulation of wealth, but this is just

an ancillary effect. Suppose the president of a company could choose between two stories to tell the stockholders. One message would be, "We enjoy great status, prestige, and influence in the industry. When we talk everybody listens. our profits are nil." The other would be, "No one in the industry pays the slightest attention to us or ever asks or advice. We are, in fact, the butt of jokes in the trade. We are making money hand over fist." There is no doubt about which story would most thoroughly warm the stockholders' hearts (on these issues, see also Rosecrance 1986).

The concept of leadership will also be undergoing significant evisceration if the pursuit of wealth--the "lust for prosperity," a Morgenthau revisionist might call it--becomes a dominant motivation in world affairs. A firm that enjoys "leadership" in the industry, but registers poor profits is likely to find stockholders suggesting that with leadership and a dollar and some change it could buy exactly one one-way trip on the New York subway. The United States is still overwhelmingly the world leader by almost any traditional standard. Yet it is often consumed with a jealousy of follower Japan that sometimes approaches paranoia.

Anarchy. Another concept that may be due for reconsideration is "international anarchy." If the Cold War continues to decline, if nations increasingly come to accept economic development as a primary goal, and if they abandon war as a method for dealing with one another, the notion that the countries of the world live in a state of "anarchy" will become highly misleading and might 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. The problem with the word 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 (on this issue, see also Milner 1991).

Mearsheimer argues that in a condition of anarchy, "there is little room for trust among states" and "security will often be scarce" (1990, 12, 45). Insofar as this perspective is a useful way to look at international politics, it holds only where violence remains an accepted way of doing business. If that is no longer true, regulation is not required and "anarchy" could become a preferable state.

## 9. Ideas as independent variables

Robert Dahl has observed that "because of their concern with rigor and their dissatisfaction with the 'softness' of historical description, generalization, and explanation, most social scientists have turned away from the historical movement of ideas. As a result, their own theories, however 'rigorous' they may be, leave out an important explanatory variable and often lead to naive reductionism" (1971, 182-83). Since beliefs and ideas are often, as Dahl notes, "a major independent variable" (1971, 188), to ignore changes in attitude is to leave something important out of consideration.

In a recent book, noted earlier, Michael Howard deals with historical patterns of war and comes to highly optimistic conclusions. Although he expects that war will persist among "undeveloped" societies, and although he suggests that civil war might still occur within both undeveloped and developed ones, he nevertheless believes it "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." This conclusion

chiefly derives from a set of observations about ideas--about the way people in the developed world have changed their attitudes toward war. At one time, he notes, they were organized into "warrior societies" in which warfare was seen to be "the noblest destiny of mankind." Howard attributes this important change in attitude to industrialization which, he argues, "ultimately produces very unwarlike societies dedicated to material welfare rather than heroic achievement" (1991, 176).

The main problem for this generalization, as Howard is quite aware, is that industrialization spoke with a forked tongue. Over the last two centuries the developed world has experienced the industrial revolution, enormous economic growth, the rise of a middle class, a vast improvement in transportation and communication, surging literacy rates, and massive increases in international trade. But it is not at all clear that the rise in the notion that war ought to be avoided was necessarily caused by these important social and economic developments. For if it encouraged some people to abandon the war spirit, it apparently propelled others to fall, if anything, more fully in love with the institution. Some of the finest pieces in Howard's book, in fact, trace the persistence, even the rise, of a militaristic spirit that became wedded to a fierce and expansionistic nationalist impetus as industrialization came to Europe in the nineteenth century. And, of course, in the next century industrialized nations fought two of the greatest wars in history. The lessons of history, then, suggest that industrialization can inspire bellicism as much as pacifism.

Howard never really provides much of an explanation for how or why industrialization must inevitably lead to an anti-military spirit. And he simply attributes the horrors and holocausts that accompanied industrialization to "the growing pains of industrial societies" (1991, 1).

Carl Kaysen has also concluded that major war is becoming obsolete, and he has advanced an argument similar to Howard's, but with far more detail about the process, particularly its economic aspects. He argues that "for most of human history, societies were so organized that war could be profitable for the victors, in both economic and political terms." However, "profound changes...following the Industrial Revolution, have changed the terms of the calculation" causing the potential gains of war to diminish and the potential costs to rise (1990, 49).

Kaysen tends to minimize the economic costs of war before the modern era, but many studies suggest they could be extremely high. Richard Kaeuper's analysis of the economic effects of decades of war in the late middle ages catalogues the destruction of property, the collapse of banks, the severing of trade and normal commerce, the depopulation of entire areas, the loss of cultivated land, the decline of production, the reduction of incomes, the disruption of coinage and credit, the hoarding of gold, and the assessment (with attendant corruption) of confiscatory war taxes (1988, 77-117). By contrast, within a few years after a terrible modern war, World War I, most of the combating nations had substantially recovered economically: by 1929 the German economy was fully back to prewar levels, while the French economy had surpassed prewar levels by 38 per cent (Overy 1982, 16). The "most meaningful question," observes Alan Milward, "is whether the cost of war has absorbed an increasing proportion of the increasing Gross National Product of the combatants. As an economic choice war, measured this way, has not shown any discernable long-term trend towards greater costliness" (1977, 3).

Not only were there many hideously destructive, even annihilative, wars before the modern era, but there was a substantial belief that many of the wars had been even more horrible than they actually were. Often--in fact, typically--war stories would substantially exaggerate the extent of the destruction and bloodshed. Yet beliefs and experiences like this had never brought about a



widespread revulsion with war as an institution nor did they inspire effective, organized demands that it be banished. Instead war continued to be accepted as a normal way of doing things.

Moreover, as with Howard's argument, the problem is that industrialization was accompanied not only by a rising peace movement, but also with a renewed romantic yearning for the cleansing process of war. In fact, industrialization made possible the "splendid little war": as Luard observes, "very short wars (two months or less) have been virtually confined to the last century or so, since it is only in this period that mobility has been sufficient to allow the type of lightning military campaign required" (1986, 79). For 19th century war advocates like Heinrich von Treitschke, this condition was literally a godsend: one could still have wars with all their nobility, heroism, and sublimity, while, thanks to industrialization, the downside of war--the distasteful bloodshed--would be kept to a bearable minimum.<sup>38</sup>

People in the developed world seem to have become disillusioned with war not because of the logical implications of industrialization, but for the same reasons they had become disillusioned with an equally old and venerable institution, slavery. Substantial efforts have been made by scholars and analysts to use material factors, particularly economic ones, to explain the origin and the amazing success of this idea. But, as Stanley Engerman has observed, slavery never was in economic decline--indeed, at the same time that the abolition movement was taking flight the Atlantic slave trade was entering an extremely profitable phase. Consequently the success of the movement has to be explained by "political, cultural, and ideological factors" (1986, 339; see also Drescher 1987, Eltis 1987, Ray 1989).

Because of unpleasant experiences with war and because of the machinations of skilled propagandists, people changed their minds about what they most valued, and they came increasingly to view war--at least war in the developed world--as immoral, uncivilized, disgusting, futile (particularly economically), and rather ridiculous. It is not at all clear they needed industrialization to come to that view (see Mueller 1991a).

Over the last century there has been a remarkable growth in the notion that war is a bad idea, and this, I think, has essentially been the result of a battle of ideas. To a substantial degree, it seems to me, the idea has grown not because it was importantly "caused" by social and economic forces, but because experience and its proponents have been able successfully to demonstrate that peace is better than war.

It is important, then, to consider what Fukuyama has called "the autonomous power of ideas" (1989, 6). Ideas in this view are very often forces themselves, not flotsam on the tide of broader social or economic patterns. War aversion has grown not because it was somehow required by social and economic change, but because the idea, ably executed and skillfully promoted at one point in the world's history, managed to catch on. More than a bit of luck was involved: in particular, the traumatic experience of World War I helped war opponents enormously (see Mueller 1991a).

Dahl warns that when one begins to consider what he calls the "historical movement of

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<sup>38</sup> It is often argued that as economic interdependence increases, people will turn against war. For Treitschke, however, the opposite was the case: because of the burgeoning, interdependent economic system, he argued, "civilized nations suffer far more than savages from the economic ravages of war, especially through the disturbance of the artificially existing credit system, which may have frightful consequences in a modern war...Therefore wars must become rarer and shorter...for it is impossible to see how the burdens of a great war could long be borne under the present conditions. But it would be false to conclude that wars can ever cease. They neither can nor should" (1916, 69-70).

ideas," one is asking for trouble: "One can hardly exaggerate how badly off we are as we move into this terrain. If it is difficult to account satisfactorily for the acquisition of individual beliefs, it is even more difficult to account for historical shifts in beliefs" (1971, 181). By ignoring this phenomenon, however, international relations scholars and theorists are in danger of leaving out an important, indeed sometimes crucial, independent variable.

In discussing the causes of international war, commentators have often found it useful to group theories into what they term levels of analysis. In his classic work, Man, the State and War (1959), Kenneth Waltz organizes the theories according to whether the cause of war is found in the nature of man, in the nature of the state, or in the nature of the international state system. More recently Jack Levy (1989), partly setting the issue of human nature to one side, organizes the theories according to whether they stress the systemic level, the nature of state and society, or the decision-making process.

In various ways, I think, these level-of-analysis approaches may direct attention away from war itself and toward concerns which may influence the incidence of war. I suggest rather that war should be visualized not as a sort of recurring outcome that is determined by other conditions, but rather as a phenomenon that has its own qualities and appeals. And over time these appeals can change. War, as suggested earlier, is merely an idea, an institution, like dueling or slavery, that has been grafted onto human existence. Unlike breathing, eating, or sex, war is not something that is somehow required by human nature, by the human condition, by the structure of international affairs, or by the forces of history.

Accordingly war can shrivel up and disappear, and this can come about without requiring that there be any notable change or improvement on any of the level of analysis categories. Specifically, war can die out without changing human nature, without modifying the nature of the state or the nation-state, without changing the international system, without creating an effective world government or system of international law, and without improving the competence or moral capacity of political leaders. It can also go away without expanding international trade, interdependence, or communication; without fabricating an effective moral or practical equivalent; without enveloping the earth in democracy or prosperity; without devising ingenious agreements to restrict arms or the arms industry; without reducing the world's considerable store of hate, selfishness, nationalism, and racism; without increasing the amount of love, justice, harmony, cooperation, good will, or inner peace in the world; without establishing security communities; and without doing anything whatever about nuclear weapons.

And, as argued earlier, not only can such a process take place, but it has been taking place for a century or more, at least within the developed world. Conflicts of interest between countries are inevitable and continue to persist within the developed world. But the notion that war should be used to resolve them has increasingly been discredited and abandoned there.

#### 10. The marketing of ideas

Randolph Siverson suggests that Retreat from Doomsday is "lacking a theory" because it relies "so heavily on the claim that people's tastes have changed" (1990, 1063). The implication, it seems, is that analyses that treat the historical movement of ideas as an independent variable can't be considered a contribution to international relations theory. It is my belief, by contrast, that theories that ignore the historical movement of ideas can't come to grips with reality because they are misspecified: they leave out a key explanatory variable.

Accounting for changes in attitudes is, as Dahl suggests, a difficult undertaking. Some

people have used the concept, or metaphor, of "learning" to begin to confront this issue. While the metaphor has some valuable resonances, it is misleading for at least three reasons.

First, it suggests that an idea, once ingested, cannot be undone. When one learns how to swim or to ride a bicycle or to speak another language, that knowledge or aptitude can never be fully unlearned--one can never return to a state of complete innocence.

Second (and relatedly), the learning analogy implies progress, betterment. Too much learning can be a bad or dangerous thing, and we sometimes speak of "learning bad habits." But for the most part we tend to believe that any learning, any increase of knowledge, is an improvement--or at any rate does no harm. But obviously, plenty of ideas that by most accepted standards prove to be bad ones--like state Communism, totalitarianism, trial by combat, genocide, the Spanish inquisition, airplane hijacking--also get "learned." Few would find these developments progressive.

And third, the learning metaphor tends to imply that new ideas can only be acquired slowly. While it is true that we sometimes talk about learning fast, the concept generally suggests gradual progress. However, while some ideas grow slowly, others (for example, that it is time for the countries of East Europe to be democratic) can catch on almost overnight.

Another metaphor stresses "diffusion." This also implies gradualism and irreversibility. Moreover, it suggests a certain inevitability, and it implies that individual people do little to influence the process.

It seems to me that the notion of marketing is more promising when trying to account for the growing acceptance of ideas like war aversion. People don't learn ideas like war aversion, nor do they ingest them by a process of diffusion; they buy them.

At any given time there are always a huge array of ideas around, and only a few of these catch on. Some may be of lengthy pedigree (like the idea that capital punishment is a bad thing and ought to be abolished), while others may be quite new and original (like the hula hoop). People sort through this market of ideas and prove receptive to some while remaining immune to others. Their receptivity may not be very predictable, but it is surely not random.

The process by which an idea is successfully marketed can be quite complicated, and it does not follow that the growth in acceptance of an idea derives simply from the manipulative cleverness of its advocates. Any knowledgeable promoter will admit that no amount of promotion can guarantee that a product will sell: as impresario Sol Hurok is alleged to have put it, "If people don't want to come, nothing will stop them." If marketing alone could assure the success of a product, we'd all be driving Edsels. Careful planning and adept promotion are important, but so are happenstance and luck.

For the last hundred years or so, a lot of people have been trying to sell the notion that war is a bad idea--very much in the way people like them had, a century earlier, tried to sell the notion that slavery ought to be abolished. There have been several components to their strategy.

First, the promoters needed to undermine the competition, to seize upon and to bring out its defects. Antiwar agitation has stressed the vulgarity, futility, brutality, and repulsiveness of warfare, and ridiculed its claims of nobility and grandeur.

Second, war's opponents sought to create demand for values which, if embraced, would rather automatically help their product to be accepted--in much the way that promoters of diet pills or corsets are aided if people generally come to embrace the belief that being thin is desirable or that promoters of nuclear power are aided by the clean air movement. For example, war

opponents have been given to stressing that prosperity and economic growth are extremely important. This argument would not do well with people who think war brings wealth, but by the end of the 19th century few people thought that it did: by that time war advocates were stressing the exhilarating qualities of war, not its economic benefits (see Mueller 1991a, 16-17). Thus if a promoter could get across the idea that material wealth is a high good, the cause of peace would be advanced.

Third, the product was effectively market tested. Once Europe had lived without large scale war for a substantial period of time in the 19th century, it became clear to many that one could live quite well without the bracing benefits of war.

Finally, there is the matter of luck and timing. Good promoters always stand ready to use fortuitous events and circumstances to advance their product, and successful promotion is often less a matter of artful manipulation than a matter of cashing in on the tides of history or of being in the right place at the right time: one must be there when opportunity knocks, and one must be prepared to lurch into action while the sound of the knock is still reverberating. Thus, although antiwar advocates were able to show as time went by that peace is markedly superior in several important respects to the competition, this was not enough to assure success: inherent superiority has never guaranteed that a product will come to dominate a market. To be sure, it is easier to peddle a good product than a bad one, but products rarely sell themselves: they need to become available at the right time and to be pushed in the right way.

The process by which attitudes toward war changed at the time of World War I seems to have been as follows (see Mueller 1991a). In the decades before 1914 antiwar entrepreneurs were preparing international thought to be receptive to their notions, and they were assiduously developing the blueprints for institutions that might be viable substitutes for war should the desire for such plans become general. Furthermore, in the century before 1914 Europeans gradually became, perhaps without quite noticing it, accustomed to the benefits of peace. Nevertheless, the traditional appeals of war persisted. For the abolition of war to become an accepted commodity, it was probably necessary for there to be one more vivid example of how appalling the hoary, time-honored institution really was. World War I may not have been all that much worse than some earlier wars, but it destroyed the comforting notion that wars in Europe would necessarily be long on dashing derring-do and short on bloodshed, and it reminded Europeans of how bad wars on their continent could become. Thanks to the prewar fulminations of the peace movement and thanks to the experience with an unprecedented century of comparative warlessness, people in the developed world were at last ready to get the message--and to buy the product.

The marketing approach in part suggests that the demise of an institution need not be permanent. As suggested in Section 5, since war is merely an idea and makes use of natural proclivities, it can never be made impossible. Even if a succession of inventive entrepreneurs are able to push it into apparent extinction, another set might be able to revive the idea with the right kind of dedicated marketing strategy. Nonetheless, institutions do become obsolete. Slavery seems quite dead (though if Hitler had triumphed, he might have revived it in some form). So do dueling, eunuchism, human sacrifice, and the bustle. And it seems that ancient and once ubiquitous institutions like monarchy and perhaps even religion are in the process of dying out. I think war is probably destined eventually to join this list, but the marketing analogy furnishes no guarantee.

### 11. Democracy and peace: a spurious connection?

It seems to me that some areas of the world can productively be considered "advanced" or

fashion leaders, and that, in general, ideas move from more advanced areas to the rest of the world. This observation may be somewhat tautological since we are likely to determine which areas are "advanced" by observing that new ideas tend to originate there. But it does seem that when ideas have filtered throughout the world in recent centuries, they have tended to do so in one direction, with what Europeans would a century ago have called the "civilized world" at the lead. Without prejudging the quality or value of the ideas so transmitted, it does seem that, for better or worse, there has been a long and fairly steady process of what is often called "Westernization": Taiwan has become more like Canada than Canada has become like Taiwan; Gabon has become more like Belgium than Belgium has become like Gabon.

In recent centuries, major ideas that have gone from the developed world to the less developed world include Christianity, the abolition of slavery, the acceptance of democratic institutions and Western economic and social forms, and the application of the scientific method. Not all of these have been fully or readily accepted, but the point is that the process has largely been unidirectional: there has so far been little in the way of a reverse flow of ideas. Sometimes ideas which have had a vogue and become passe in the West can still be seen to be playing themselves out in the less advanced world: the romance about violent class revolution, largely a 19th century Western idea, has been mostly discredited in the West, but it continues to inspire a (declining) number of revolutionaries in less developed lands.

The growth in acceptance of the idea of democracy seems best explained by this sort of analysis (see Mueller 1990). After a long marketing process, democracy has been selling well, particularly lately, even in such isolated and backward places as Burma and Madagascar. Like soccer and Shakespeare and fast food and the cotton gin and the airplane and the machine gun and the computer and the Beatles, it caught on first in one corner of the world and is in the process, except where halted by dedicated forces, of spreading worldwide. Eventually, I suppose, it could fall from fashion, but for now things look pretty good.

Democratic promoters were lucky that they first test marketed their product in Britain and America (in the United States it was called "the American experiment") because, in the process, democracy came to be associated with countries which were held to be admirable--that is, which became fashion leaders or role models--for reasons that were often quite irrelevant to the institution itself. Moreover, they were lucky that the French revolution, with all its democratic excesses, came after, rather than before, the substantial establishment of democracy in the United States and Britain. Had France stood as the only example of democracy, the experience might have permanently discredited the product. They were also lucky that the spectacular, if temporary, failure of democracy in America--the Civil War--didn't happen earlier. In addition, the progress of democracy has sometimes been importantly propelled by unforeseen events, particularly World Wars I and II--and III--which substantially discredited some of its chief competitors: respectively, monarchy, Fascism, and Communism.

By the same token, however, the triumph of democracy has been by no means inevitable. If democracy had been badly marketed, the world might never have adopted democracy at all.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, since literacy and modern communications do not seem to be required for a country to become democratic, the world--or substantial portions of it--could have become democratic centuries earlier if the right people at the right time had gotten the idea, had deftly

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<sup>39</sup> One of democracy's greatest promoters, Thomas Jefferson, was fully aware of the danger posed by the disastrous French example. As he wrote in 1795, "What a tremendous obstacle to the future attempts at liberty will be the atrocities of Robespierre!" (1939, p. 279).

promoted and market tested it, and been graced by the right kind of luck.

In the last few years there has been a burgeoning and intriguing discussion about the connection between democracy and war aversion (see for example, Russett 1990). Most notable has been the empirical observation that no two democracies have ever gotten into a war with each other. To me, this relationship seems substantially spurious. The idea that war is undesirable and inefficacious and the idea that democracy is a good form of government have largely followed the same market trajectory: they were bought first in northern Europe and the United States and then gradually, with a number of traumatic setbacks, became more accepted elsewhere. In this view, war aversion not only is associated with the rise of democracy, but also with the decline of slavery, religion, capital punishment, and cigarette smoking and with the growing acceptance of capitalism, scientific methodology, environmentalism, and abortion.

While these ideas all have followed the same trajectory, however, they have been substantially out of synchronization with each other: they have followed parallel trends, but not coterminous ones. The movement toward democracy began 200 years ago, but the movement against war began only 100 years ago. Critics of the democracy/peace connection often cite examples of wars or near-wars between democracies. Most of these took place before World War I--that is, before war aversion had been bought as an idea by large numbers of people in the "advanced" world.

Democracy, in H.L. Mencken's irreverent words, is "the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard" (1920, 203). If they want war, they'll get it. Before 1914, democracies were often poised for war, even with other democracies: France and England certainly neared war in the Fashoda crisis, and both the War of 1812 and World War I could be considered to have democrats on both sides. Moreover, if Cuba had been as brutally run by democratic Belgium in 1898 as it was by undemocratic Spain, the resentment triggered in the United States is unlikely to have been much less. Belgium and Holland got into a war in 1830, and Switzerland in 1847 and the United States in 1861 tumbled into civil wars in which the two sides remained essentially democratic.

Since World War I, the democracies have been in the lead in rejecting war as a methodology. As discussed in Section 4, this has not necessarily caused them to adopt a pacifist approach, and many of them have found themselves in wars, usually deriving from colonial commitments or from participation in the Cold War against threatening Communism. But they have taken the lead in promoting the ideas that war is a bad thing and that democracy is a good one. However, while democracy and war aversion have largely been marketed by the same promoters, the relationship does not seem to be a causal one. And when the two trends are substantially out of sync today, democracies will fight one another. Jordan's elected parliament likes to scream for war with Israel. It is not at all clear that telling the hawks in the Jordanian parliament that Israel is a democracy will dampen their ardor in the slightest.

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