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THE WAR PUZZLE REVISITED

John A. Vasquez's *The War Puzzle* provided one of the most important scientific analyses of the causes of war of the last two decades. *The War Puzzle Revisited* updates and extends his groundbreaking work, reviewing recent research on the onset and expansion of war and the conditions of peace. Vasquez describes systematically those factors associated with wars to see if there is a pattern that suggests why war occurs, and how it might be avoided, delineating the typical path by which relatively equal states have become embroiled in wars in the modern global system. The book uses the large number of empirical findings generated in the last twenty-five years as the basis of its theorizing, and integrates these research findings so as to advance the scientific knowledge of war and peace.

John A. Vasquez is Thomas B. Mackie Scholar in International Relations at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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*To Elyse
peace of my heart*

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P R E F A C E

Over the years I have been asked by colleagues and students if I was going to do a second edition of *The War Puzzle* or an update. I was hesitant to do so, because at a certain point the text of a book takes on a life of its own. This was particularly the case with this book, because its larger purpose was to construct an explanation of why war occurs on the basis of an inductive review of existing findings. Once that inductive explanation was constructed, the more important task was to test that explanation deductively rather than tinker with it by looking at new findings. In the last fifteen years, I have spent most of my time conducting such deductively oriented empirical tests, including several co-authored studies, particularly with the late Paul D. Senese.

It was always my intention, once that research reached a critical mass, to revisit the war puzzle to see what the new findings would tell us about the explanation set forth in the original book. The book before you is the fulfillment of that long-term goal. It is not so much a second edition as it is a book that keeps the original text intact, but supplements it with two new chapters whose purpose is not to augment the original explanation of war but appraise its scientific adequacy in light of the quantitative research conducted since 1993 that is relevant to the steps to war.

The main reason for doing this book is scientific. It is to see how the propositions in *The War Puzzle* have been tested and how the two explanations embodied in the book – the territorial explanation of war (Chapter 4) and the steps-to-war explanation (Chapter 5) have fared. Chapter 10 reviews the research on territory and Chapter 11 reviews the research on power politics. This research has been very encouraging both in terms of failing to falsify the original theory and in breaking new ground. At the same time, as one would expect, not everything has worked out. The natural domain of the theory is the classic 1816–1945 era. It fits the Cold War

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only partially, but the post-Cold War period seems to be returning to the patterns found in the classic era, making the theory still relevant for the immediate past and the future.

From the reader's perspective, the major difference between *The War Puzzle* and this book is that the former provided an explanation of why war occurs and this book complements the former by presenting a substantial amount of evidence that gives us an idea of where that explanation is correct and where it is not. Nonetheless, I have added to the text some brief "retrospective" commentaries after Part I and Part II. These look back on each chapter, indicating what I think now, after fifteen years have passed.

Several people have been kind enough to read the new portions of this book. Marie Henehan provided several critical readings and important advice. Sara McLaughlin Mitchell provided a close reading of Chapter 10 and Doug Gibler did the same for both Chapters 10 and 11 on short notice. My thanks also to Brandon Valeriano for suggestions on these two chapters and his work on types of war. More importantly, I thank each of them and all of the other authors cited in these chapters for the research they have conducted on interstate war and conflict. I am particularly appreciative for the research and insights of Michael Colaresi, Karen Rasler, and William Thompson on the steps to war. My thanks especially to Jack Levy, who encouraged me (more than once) to undertake this project. I am also grateful to the several anonymous referees who provided reports to Cambridge University Press, with valuable suggestions. I have not always taken everyone's advice, so I remain responsible for any errors and flaws.

My new colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, especially Paul Diehl and Colin Flint, have provided an intellectually stimulating environment in which to think and write about peace and war. As always, it has been a great pleasure working with John Haslam and Cambridge University Press. My thanks also go to various doctoral students who have worked on the steps to war in other studies: Choong-Nam Kang, Chris Leskiw, Andy Owsiak, Karen Petersen, Toby Rider, and Susan Sample. In preparing the manuscript, I am grateful to the Thomas B. Mackie research fund at the University of Illinois for support, to Delinda Swanson for preparing the references and the index, and to Audrey Cotterell for copy-editing.

The War Puzzle was completed when my daughter was eight. I dedicated the book to her because I was working on it for most of her life

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PREFACE

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and because she provided me with a sense of peace conducive to working on this sort of subject. She is now twenty-three, having just finished her Master's. I re-dedicate this work to her. Raising children always has more uncertainty about it than parents want; she has provided us with more joy than we anticipated and more satisfaction than we deserve.

*August 11, 2008
Block Island, Rhode Island*

PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL TEXT

This book treats war as a social phenomenon that recurs in human experience. Instead of focusing on any particular war, I am interested in systematically describing those factors which are common to wars and to the peace that follows to see if there is a pattern that suggests why war recurs and how it might be avoided or mitigated. The end result will be an explanation of the onset and expansion of war and the conditions of a stable peace. This involves explaining why and how wars occur, why some wars expand, why some historical periods and interstate relationships are more peaceful than others, why some peaces last longer than others, and how they work to avoid war.

The task set forth in this book would be almost impossible for a single individual to tackle were it not for an international community of peace researchers who have been dedicated to investigating manageable portions of the problem in a rigorous way. Their efforts have made mine possible. They have contributed a new body of evidence and insight on war and peace distinct from those provided by history, traditional discourse, and political philosophy. In this book, I seek to integrate and explain their findings in a way that will move the culmination of scientific knowledge on war and peace forward.

My greatest debt is to those peace researchers who have painstakingly worked to document generalizations about war and peace. My debt to them is acknowledged in the text every time I discuss their work and cite their studies. This is particularly the case when I am critical of an explanation or give an alternate interpretation to a finding. Just because I have disagreed with something does not mean I have not found it valuable.

I have benefited not only from the body of knowledge generated by peace researchers, but in many instances from the willingness of individual scholars to read and comment on parts of the manuscript or papers presented from it. Since this book has taken a long time to write and since I have not kept a record of every instance, I know I will forget to mention

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some who have provided a contribution. With apologies in advance, let me acknowledge the following who were generous with their help, time, and insights, and provided important feedback to me: Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, Paul Diehl, Brian Ferguson, Gary Goertz, Charles Gochman, Patrick James, James Turner Johnson, Charles Kegley, Jr., Sheldon Levy, Richard Lore, Manus Midlarsky, T. Clifton Morgan, Karen Rasler, James Lee Ray, Gregory Raymond, A. Bikash Roy, Alan Sabrosky, Randolph Siverson, William R. Thompson, Peter Wallenstein, and Frank Wayman.

In addition to these people, five individuals have played a special role in the evolution of this work. At the very beginning, Harold Guetzkow and J. David Singer provided models of inspiration and discipline. Harold Guetzkow's description of how to construct theory in his "Long Range Research in International Relations" provided a guiding light in uncharted academic ground. This, along with his personal encouragement and early advice on how to spend one's time, were of immense help. David Singer has probably been the key critical influence on this work. Without him, there would have been no Correlates of War project, and without that project this book would not have been possible. David Singer has been generous in giving me his time and has been supportive of my endeavors. He read early versions of the key chapters (chapters 4 through 7) and provided valuable criticisms. Steve Smith, managing editor of the Cambridge series, is one of three people who read the entire manuscript. He provided suggestions that improved the overall structure of the book and its theoretical argument. I am grateful for his long-term commitment to the project and his faith in it. Jack Levy, my new colleague at Rutgers, also read the entire manuscript – and parts of it more than once. His comments have always been stimulating, provocative, and educational. The manuscript has benefited from his readings. Marie Henahan, my partner and colleague, has read the manuscript more times than anyone with the exception of myself. Her substantive and editorial criticisms have saved me from more than several errors. More importantly, without her presence I do not think I would have been able to complete this study. I deeply appreciate her steadfast support. Even though at times I became discouraged about the project, she never did.

All of the above persons greatly improved the book, but they are in no way responsible for the omissions, errors, and misinterpretations that remain. Nor, since they do not all agree with each other, should they be seen as necessarily agreeing with the interpretations I present here. Nevertheless, I hope each will find this work as making a contribution to our common endeavor.

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A book of this length requires a great deal of time and space. Block Island, a small community of people, gulls and beaches, provided the space where my ideas and thoughts could come together and eventually be expressed in the written word. Several agencies provided time. Rutgers University, in the form of the Faculty Academic Study Program and research support from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, permitted me to get started. A Fulbright research grant to spend a year in Beograd, Yugoslavia allowed me to maintain the momentum I had gathered on my sabbatical. My stay provided enough time and distance from the US to gain perspective and commit key parts of the manuscript to paper. My thanks to my sponsor, Radoslav Stojanovic, and to Sima Avramovic for making my stay productive and informative. Without the sabbatical and subsequent Fulbright, this book could not have been written. Several groups funded a course reduction in my teaching load from time to time which permitted me to work on the book. I thank the President's Coordinating Council (of Rutgers University) and the New Jersey Division of Higher Education for this invaluable support. My special thanks to Manus Midlarsky, Director of the Center for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, who not only provided funds for my work but has also provided an intellectual stimulus for serious work on conflict and peace at Rutgers. While I have felt the need to have a reduction in my teaching load in order to complete this study, I have also benefited greatly from teaching the ideas and research in this book to my undergraduate and graduate students. They have provided a constant sounding board, convincing me, as it has others, that good scholarship and good teaching feed off each other. Finally, let me express my appreciation to Michael Holdsworth who waited patiently for this manuscript and to Sheila McEnery and the staff of Cambridge University Press for the care they take in preparing manuscripts for publication.

I started research on this book the year before my daughter, Elyse, was born. She is now eight. Those have been important years. She has provided a peace for me and has helped me find my home. To her I dedicate this work of mid-life.

Block Island, Rhode Island