

Understanding War and Peace

Second edition

Written for undergraduate students studying the politics of conflict and cooperation, *Understanding War and Peace* considers the roots of global conflicts and the various means used to resolve them. Edited by Dan Reiter with contributing authors who are all leading scholars in the field, it balances approachable, engaging writing with a conceptually rigorous overview of the most important ideas in conflict studies.

Focusing on concepts, policy, and historical applications, the text minimizes literature reviews and technical jargon to engagingly present all major topics in international conflict, including nuclear weapons, peacekeeping, terrorism, gender, alliances, nuclear weapons, environment and conflict, civil wars, and public opinion. Enriching the textbook pedagogy, each chapter concludes with a summary of a published quantitative study to introduce students with no prior quantitative training to quantitative analysis. Online resources for instructors include an instructor manual, a test bank, and contemporary case studies for each chapter topic regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

Dan Reiter is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Political Science at Emory University. He is one of the leading scholars in international relations, having published across the breadth of conflict topics, including the causes of war, bargaining and war, alliances, terrorism, nuclear weapons, gender and conflict, military effectiveness and war outcomes, IR decision-making, domestic politics and foreign policy, the democratic peace, military strategy, foreign-imposed regime change, and others. He has won many scholarly awards, served on the editorial boards of leading journals in political science and international relations, and taught undergraduates for decades.

“*Understanding War and Peace* is an outstanding textbook that offers an insightful and comprehensive introduction to the complex world of international conflict. Written by a team of leading scholars in the field, it delivers an engaging and accessible overview of the most important concepts and historical applications in the study of war, making it an ideal resource for undergraduate students. The book’s focus on policy and real-world examples, coupled with its innovative pedagogy, including quantitative analysis, and valuable online resources, make it an indispensable tool for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of global conflicts and their resolutions.”

Professor Allan C. Stam, *University of Virginia*

“*Understanding War and Peace* is an exceptional textbook that thoroughly prepares students for further analysis and coursework in international conflict. Its highly innovative structure is unique and extremely valuable as a teaching tool. Finally, a hallmark of this book is that it is exceptionally well-written, and therefore easily engages the reader and maintains the reader’s interest.”

Professor Hein Goemans, *University of Rochester*

“This concise text is a fantastic resource for engaging international relations students. It draws on first-rate scholarship to teach complex, important topics in an accessible manner. *Understanding War and Peace* is a valuable addition to any syllabus and is sure to promote learning, spur discussion, and provoke thought among those entering the field.”

Professor Caitlin Talmadge, *Georgetown University*

“*Understanding War and Peace* is an accessible but comprehensive guide to the complex and fundamental issue of conflict in the contemporary international system which can be used as an introductory textbook but may also be useful to the concerned public.”

Professor Filippo Andreatta, *University of Bologna*

“Cleverly conceived and lucidly written, this book relies on leading scholars to provide a sweeping education about the field of international relations: its topics, methods, and debates.”

Professor Jennifer M. Lind, *Dartmouth College*

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Second edition

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Preface

DAN REITER

Understanding War and Peace (second edition) is a textbook for use in lower and upper level undergraduate classes in international relations, conflict, and war. The textbook covers leading ideas about the causes, prosecution, termination, consequences, and prevention of many kinds of violent conflicts, including wars between states, civil wars, insurgency, drone warfare, terrorism, violence against girls and women, and others.

The chapters are all specifically written with undergraduate readers in mind. That is, they are not reprinted or abbreviated journal articles. Chapters focus on concepts without being too heavy on jargon, they keep literature review to a minimum, and they make liberal use of policy and historical applications. Each chapter is written by a leading scholar with expertise in that field, ensuring that the content reflects the cutting edge of academic research, and each is designed as a stand-alone chapter, meaning that no chapter presumes that the student has read any other chapter, though the chapters do cross-reference each other. The chapters also do not presume that the student has taken any other relevant coursework, such as an introduction to international relations course or courses in research methods or statistics.

Each chapter contains three sections of content. The first chapter section is the main body of content, working through the main concepts with plenty of historical and policy examples as illustrations. The second chapter section is a case study of a historical episode, designed to illustrate some of the main concepts from the chapter. The third chapter section contains a nontechnical summary of a previously published quantitative study on some proposition from the chapter. This third section is designed to be readable for any student, even those without any background in statistics or math, and is intended in part to introduce students to the approach of using quantitative empirical methods. Both the second and third sections are independent of the first section, meaning that the first section can be assigned with or without assigning either the second or third sections.

There are also separate, chapter-specific content modules available online, on the textbook website. For example, there are chapter-specific modules on the Ukraine War. Instructors can assign a Ukraine War module to help illustrate conceptual ideas presented in an assigned chapter.

Each chapter contains several pedagogical tools. Students are provided with a list of key terms, all of which are discussed in the chapter. There are review questions, all of which are

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answered within the chapter. There is also a list of discussion questions which can be used to generate discussion in class, or as shorter writing assignments. Each chapter also includes a list of suggested additional readings for students. Lastly, instructors have secure online access to a bank of multiple choice test questions, thirty questions per chapter.

The Introduction that follows this Preface serves two functions. First, it provides a general survey of war itself, touching on a few scholarly debates such as whether or not the frequency or intensity of war is in decline. Second, it introduces the essentials of the scientific method, defining terms such as hypothesis, independent variable, dependent variable, and spurious correlation. Knowing these terms will help students work through the summaries of quantitative research presented in the chapters. The discussion of research method is completely nonquantitative.

The book's substantive chapters that follow the Introduction cover many aspects of war and are grouped into five parts. The first offers broad perspectives on war. Chapter 1, "Bargaining and War" by Dan Reiter, presents the broad theoretical perspective of thinking about war as an exercise in bargaining, or more specifically that international relations is in general all about bargaining, and war is part of that bargaining process. This chapter tries to solve perhaps the most central puzzle in the entire study of war: if war is so costly, why do actors sometimes stumble into war?

Chapter 2, "Sex, Gender, and Violence" by Valerie Hudson and Dan Reiter, examines the relationships between the biological category of sex, the social category of gender, and violent behavior. It examines a number of possible causal pathways among sex, gender, and violence, and then discusses several different possible forms of violence caused by sex and/or gender dynamics, including conflict between states, civil wars, terrorism, violence against women and girls, and others.

The chapters in Part II examine the many possible connections between domestic politics and war. Chapter 3, "Domestic Political Institutions and War" by Jessica Weeks, begins Part II's examination of the relationships between politics within states and politics between states. The chapter touches on very well-established debates on the "democratic peace," the proposition that countries with democratic political institutions are significantly less likely to fight each other. But its primary focus is on contemporary ideas and debates, exploring in particular whether variation in authoritarian political institutions, such as whether an autocratic regime is ruled by a personalist dictator, a single political party, or a military junta, affects a state's likelihood of starting and winning interstate wars.

Chapter 4, "Public Opinion and War" by Christopher Gelpi, focuses on domestic politics within democratic settings, and in particular on how public opinion might shape decisions for war. What kinds of factors shape public support for or opposition to war? Does public opinion drive the decisions of elected leaders for war, or are those leaders able to ignore public beliefs? The chapter draws on survey research aimed at answering these questions, as well as ideas from political psychology that seek to understand opinion formation.

Chapter 5, "Leaders and War" by Michael Horowitz, builds on Chapters 3 and 4 by examining national leaders, and in particular whether the background and profile of national leaders might affect the likelihood of war. It also unpacks whether national leaders can act with impunity, or whether they are constrained by the domestic political institutions of their countries, linking with the discussion in Chapter 3. Last, it examines national leader

decisionmaking. When leaders must choose whether or not to go to war, are they acting with clear heads and vision, or are their choices clouded by cognitive or other biases?

Chapter 6, “Economics and War” by Paul Poast, pushes the discussion of domestic politics and war in a new direction, examining the connections between economics and war. One important way that wars affect domestic societies is through the economic cost required to pay for them. The average citizen is materially affected: more guns means less butter. How do leaders pay for wars? Are some means of paying for wars easier to sell to skeptical publics than others?

Part III of the book shifts the focus towards conflict within states. Chapter 7, “Civil Wars” by Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, lays important foundations for thinking about how civil wars break out. The outbreak of civil war means the government has failed in its most central function, the maintenance of order. How does this happen? What factors make the onset of civil war more likely?

Chapter 8, “Terrorism” by Philip Potter, examines the ultimate weapon of the weak, terrorism. It discusses the concept and definition of terrorism, and asks a series of questions, such as: Why do groups turn to terrorist tactics? Why do people join terrorist groups? Are terrorist groups more likely to emerge and thrive in some domestic political environments than others? What policy tools might be useful against terrorism?

Part IV examines two important forms of international diplomacy related to conflict. Chapter 9, “International Alliances” by Dan Reiter, concerns agreements between states to fight or work together when their security is threatened. The course of international diplomatic history has been powerfully shaped by alliances, from the Grand Coalitions that eventually defeated Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815 to the victories of the Allies in the World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century, to the emergence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Warsaw Pact alliances that created the structure of the Cold War, to the enduring relevance of many alliances into the 2020s. The chapter develops several important concepts concerning the form, origins, consequences, and compliance patterns of alliances.

Chapter 10, “Third-Party Peacemaking and Peacekeeping” by Kyle Beardsley, describes how third-party actors such as the United Nations and others sometimes try to end wars both within and between states through mediation. These actors also sometimes try to strengthen postwar peace through efforts such as the dispatch of peacekeeping troops to war-torn regions. The chapter examines the thinking behind these efforts to produce lasting solutions to conflict, and then also the conditions under which they might or might not work.

The fifth and final part examines three specific forms of contemporary conflict. Chapter 11, “Nuclear Weapons” by Michael Horowitz, discusses the most destructive technology of any kind developed by humans. It covers several of the core theoretical ideas about nuclear deterrence developed during the Cold War, concepts which remain important into the 2020s. It also examines contemporary questions of nuclear proliferation, examining the causes and consequences of, and possible policy solutions to, nuclear proliferation.

Chapter 12, “Drone Warfare” by Sarah Kreps, addresses the use of nonpiloted aircraft by states and nonstate actors in the new century. Drones emerged in the 2000s as a critical tool for the United States in its war on terror and insurgency, and since then has come to be used globally. What are the battlefield advantages and disadvantages of drones? Is drone use ethical

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or legal? Is it popular? Has drone use violated norms of democratic governance? What is the future of drones? This chapter addresses these questions and more.

Chapter 13, “Environment and Conflict” by Cullen Hendrix, unpacks the highly complex relationships between environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, and violent conflict. The chapter presents basic ideas about natural resources, and why they get depleted. It also examines several concepts connecting the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation to a variety of forms of violent conflict, examining issues such as drought, transboundary water resources, climate change, and others.