

## THE STUPIDITY OF WAR

It could be said that American foreign policy since 1945 has been one long miscue; most international threats—including during the Cold War—have been substantially exaggerated. The result has been agony and bloviation, unnecessary and costly military interventions that have mostly failed. A policy of complacency and appeasement likely would have worked better. In this highly readable book, John Mueller argues with wisdom and wit rather than ideology and hyperbole that aversion to international war has had considerable consequences. There has seldom been significant danger of major war. Nuclear weapons, international institutions, and America's role as a super power have been substantially irrelevant; post-Cold War policy has been animated more by vast proclamation and half-vast execution than by the appeals of liberal hegemony; and post-9/11 concerns about international terrorism and nuclear proliferation have been overwrought and often destructive. Meanwhile, threats from Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, or from cyber technology are limited and manageable. Unlikely to charm Washington, Mueller explains how, when international war is in decline, complacency and appeasement become viable diplomatic devices and a large military is scarcely required.

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-84383-6 — The Stupidity of War  
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Frontmatter  
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# The Stupidity of War

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CASE  
FOR COMPLACENCY

**JOHN MUELLER**

Ohio State University and the Cato Institute



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108843836](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108843836)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108920278

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First published 2021

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Mueller, John E., author.

TITLE: The stupidity of war : American foreign policy and the case for complacency / John Mueller.

OTHER TITLES: American foreign policy and the case for complacency

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Includes index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020029064 (print) | LCCN 2020029065 (ebook) | ISBN

9781108843836 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108920278 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: United States – Foreign relations – 20th century. | Cold War – Influence. | United States – Military relations – 21st century. | United States – Military policy – History – 20th century. | United States – Military policy – History – 21st century. | War (Philosophy)

CLASSIFICATION: LCC E744 .M84 2021 (print) | LCC E744 (ebook) | DDC 327.73009/04–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020029064>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020029065>

ISBN 978-1-108-84383-6 Hardback

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978-1-108-84383-6 — The Stupidity of War  
John Mueller  
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*To Judy, again and always, and to Lois, Phyllis, Karl, Michelle, Karen,  
Erik, Susan, Kraig, Timothy, Sam, Cameron, Kara, Malcolm, Atticus,  
and, of course, Lida.*

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978-1-108-84383-6 — The Stupidity of War  
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## Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Prologue: The Rise of War Aversion and the Decline of International War	1
PART I ASSESSING THE THREAT RECORD	27
1 Korea, Massive Extrapolation, Deterrence, and the Crisis Circus	29
2 Containment, Vietnam, and the Curious End of the Cold War	47
3 Military Intervention and the Continued Quest for Threat after the Cold War	65
4 Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan	89
5 Chasing Terrorists Around the Globe and Other Post-9/11 Ventures	121
PART II EVALUATING PRESENT THREATS	139
6 The Rise of China, the Assertiveness of Russia, and the Antics of Iran	141
7 Proliferation, Terrorism, Humanitarian Intervention, and Other Problems	168
8 Hedging, Risk, Arrogance, and the Iraq Syndrome	193
Afterword: Aversion to International War as an Explanatory Variable	207
<i>Appendix: A Sardonic Litany</i>	224
<i>Notes</i>	235
<i>References</i>	277
<i>Index</i>	312

## Figures

- |     |  |               |
|-----|--|---------------|
| 0.1 | Number of ongoing wars in each year, 1946–2019     | <i>page 3</i> |
| 8.1 | Public opinion trends on “isolationism,” 1945–2019 | 201           |



## Acknowledgements

For help, comments, and advice along the way, I am grateful to Robert Jervis, John Glaser, Chris Preble, Chris Fettweis, Alex Thompson, Mark Stewart, and Karl Mueller. I would like to express particular gratitude to Steve Pinker for thoughtful advice, extended comments, and invaluable support. And thanks as well to Robert Dreesen and the gang at Cambridge University Press, including the anonymous reviewers, for putting this all together.

War is mankind's most tragic and stupid folly.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commencement speech at the United States Military Academy, West Point, June 3, 1947. Quoted by President Barack Obama at the same venue, May 28, 2014.

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.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, 1991.