

supplement, with data specific to contemporary society, to the political anthropology studies whose main theme is how democratic communities function.

Richard Ned Lebow. *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

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International relations, as a discipline, is concerned with the many and varied questions that arise through inter-state engagement. Some are trivial and fleeting, specific to a certain space and time and destined to only ever emerge as a sub-specialty, perhaps with a small group of committed yet marginalised scholars pursuing answers to questions that most in the field will only ever consider of secondary or tertiary appeal. Some questions, though, are central to what this social science is about, perhaps none more so than questions of war and peace in international politics. International politics, so said John Mearsheimer, is a ruthless and dangerous business and there is no sector of that business more ruthless or dangerous than war. As a result, understanding why states enter into wars that have, in the last century alone, led to the collapse of empires, the subjugation of great powers and the destruction of man and his environment is essential, if only to mitigate the ruthlessness and danger and not solve it. In this disciplinary and historical context, Richard Ned Lebow's *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War* offers an argument that, if heeded, should teach theorists and practitioners of international affairs just how and why they continue to find themselves embroiled in conflict year after year.

Lebow's book is presented in seven chapters, including an introduction to his work and a thoughtful and reflective conclusion. The body of his work begins with an assessment of existing explanations for the occurrence of war (Chapter 2: Theories of War) followed by his key research findings on historical wars (Chapter 3: Theory and Propositions and Chapter 4: Data Set and Findings). Lebow follows his historical assessment of the causes of war with an assessment of the probable future causes and incidence of war in international politics. The fifth chapter (Interest and Security) clearly avoids specific prediction and instead engages in what Lebow terms "informed speculation" (p.132) about the likely continuation of the historical causal trends he has previously established, beginning with interest and security. The following chapter (Chapter 6: Standing and Revenge) considers the other two historical motives for war which between them are implicated in contributing to almost 70% of the wars in Lebow's data set. A conclusion follows, summarising the research but also carefully limiting the study and warning against social scientists giving too much weight to proximate causes when theorising war. The volume is

completed with the inclusion of Lebow's data set (pp.227-247) analysing 94 international wars across more than 350 years and a complete bibliography.

The significance of this study lies in Lebow establishing four primary motives for war in international politics. The first of these is interest, defined by Lebow as "a principal liberal motive...[that] refers to policies intended to maximise wealth" (p.107). Examples like the Gulf War of 1991 are offered but, reaching further back into international history, two of the Anglo-Dutch wars (1652 and 1665) and the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929 are counted as wars motivated by interest. A second motive is standing, described as the "relative ranking among states" (p.108) and suggested by Lebow to be the most important cause of war. Indeed, Lebow would conclude that 58% of wars in the post-Westphalia period included standing as a motive (p.114) far outstripping interest (7%) and the two other motives he posits: revenge, "an expression of anger" (p.108), at 10% and security at 18%. Combined, then, Lebow contends that these four motives account for some 93% of all wars in the modern era, a finding that is challenging to both theoretical realists and liberals alike and is the key contribution of the book to the question of war and peace in international affairs.

Neorealists, for example, will appreciate Lebow's contention that standing and security are motives in three-quarters of all wars, yet their enthusiasm will be tempered by the significant proportion of wars motivated by revenge, which would likely fall under the classical realist's human nature explanation for international action. Liberals can find solace in Lebow's argument that war, as a political option to be exercised, is in decline; yet Lebow finds little of value in liberal arguments about the calming effects of institutions, the impacts of globalisation or within the democratic peace tradition that can be held to be playing a part in affecting the incidence of war (pp.203-210).

Indeed, this volume challenges the reader to conclude that there may be elements of classical realism, structural realism, liberalism and constructivism that can be helpful but that no one theoretical approach to international politics is wholly capable of explaining the incidence and frequency of the recourse to war by nation-states. Lebow's work and its focus on motives rather than goals forces the reader to re-assess their notions of why wars occur, leaving aside – if only temporarily – the geography of battlefields, the weighing of success and failure and returning instead to a Clausewitzian idea of a rational continuation of politics by other means. *Why Nations Fight* will be of interest to theorists of international politics, scholars of war and peace and international historians seeking a new perspective and typology of the wars that have plagued the international system since Münster and Osnabrück gifted to the world the modern nation-state.