NATIONS IN CONFLICT

National Growth and International Violence

NAZLI CHOUCRI ROBERT C. NORTH

NATIONS IN CONFLICT

NATIONAL GROWTH AND INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE

Nazli Choucri

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Robert C. North

Stanford University

W. H. Freeman and Company
San Francisco

Maps drawn by Judi McCarty, 1974

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Choucri, Nazli.
Nations in conflict.

Bibliography: p. 339
Includes index.
1. International relations—Research. 2. Peace—Research.
I. North, Robert Carver, joint author. II. Title
JX1291.C48 327 74–23453
ISBN 0–7167–0773–X

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 2 1

To Hayward R. Alker, Jr.

Preface

The investigation reported in this book began as a study of the roots of World War I, particularly the long-range considerations that made war in 1914 highly probable. As we examined the historical material in greater depth and detail it became increasingly apparent that the international dynamics leading to WWI were not unique, but that they were illustrative of interaction among all major powers and the struggle for domination and control. It became apparent also that the "causes" of war in 1914 were not historically unique, that there were many analogies and similarities with other wars in other times and places.

These realizations gradually forced us to shift the focus of our study from the specifics of WWI to the broader framework of nations in conflict. World War I is thus one particular illustration of the dynamics of conflict and warfare, and of the role of national growth and expansion in predisposing nations toward violence. We believe that the long-range tendencies toward war are of a generic nature, and that it is possible through careful systematic analysis to identify them and determine the extent to which they condition and constrain short-term, day-to-day behavior, particularly in crisis situations.

We are indebted to many colleagues, students, and research assistants at Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and elsewhere. Without their ideas, assistance, and helpful criticism this volume and the research behind it would not have been completed or even begun. The works of the late Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Erwin Schrödinger, and Quincy Wright provided us with crucial ideas and perspectives about human beings and their planet that largely inspired this whole undertaking.

Beginning with the earliest stages of our investigation we received invaluable suggestions and criticisms from Edward Azar, Richard Lagerstrom, Raymond Tanter, and J. David Singer. Richard Snyder read the initial draft of our manuscript and gave us many pages of precise, carefully reasoned criticisms and suggestions. The writers are also indebted in fundamental ways to Davis Bobrow, Kenneth Boulding, Richard Brody, John Burton, Karl Deutsch, Heinz Eulau, Harold Fisher, Johan Galtung, Harold Guetzkow, Morton Kaplan, Charles McClelland, Ronald McKinnon, Thomas Milburn, David Munford, A. F. K. Organski, Charles Osgood, Raymond Platig, Volker Rittberger, Richard Rosecrance, James Rosenau, Easton Rothwell, Rudolph Rummell, Bruce Russett, Wilbur Schramm, Melvin Small, Paul Smoker, Peter Temin, Clarence Thurber, Richard Ullman, and Dina Zinnes.

Data-gathering tends to be a slow, painstaking, often frustrating task. Jean Heflin, David Corey, and John Brooks compiled the initial time-series data that was the basis for our early experimentations with quantitative historical analysis. For their willingness, persistence, and dedication we are particularly grateful to Clydia Cuykendall, Randall Fields, Orlene Fingar, Kathleen Foote, Jonathan Medalia, Michael Milburn, Peter Milburn, Woesha Hampson, David Lebling, Susan Newcomer, Elizabeth North, John Shippee, Brenda Williamson, and Denise Wilson. We are indebted also to Ajaj Jarrouge and Michael Mihalka for testing and retesting some of our basic propositions.

The entire data set was subsequently revised, recompiled, rechecked and re-rechecked by Raisa Deber at M.I.T. Her hard work and precision have been essential to the development of the second series of historical data that is the basis for the analysis reported here. In addition to computer assistance and methodological collaboration, Mrs. Deber's skillful editing greatly enhanced the text.

Douglas Hibbs, Jay Kadane, and William C. Mitchell gave priceless assistance and advice on methodological problems. Linda Fields supervised the manuscript through several drafts—revising, organizing, and tightening. And, finally, Howard Beckman, of W. H. Freeman and Company, a most sensitive, talented, and relentless taskmaster, inspired, guided, drove, and gently coerced us through three more revisions—and a kind of transformation.

But it is to the scholar and friend to whom this book is dedicated that we owe the greatest debt of all. At every stage of our investigation Hayward Alker has challenged our assumptions and procedures and has forced us to confront difficult, sometimes insurmountable, methodological and theoretical problems. Like a stern conscience, whenever we thought that what we had done was "good enough," he pressed us to "try one more run." However, much as we would like him to share accountability for errors of omission or commission, we

alone are wholly responsible for both the quantitative and historical investigations.

Early phases of our study were supported by the Ford Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency; later aspects were undertaken with grants from the National Science Foundation. We are also indebted to the Stern Family Fund for seminal funding in the development of computer applications to problems of conflict and integration. It goes without saying that none of these sources of support is in any way responsible for our concepts, methods, or conclusions.

All quantitative analyses were undertaken on TROLL/1, an interactive computer system for econometric analysis, model-building, and simulation. We are grateful to Edwin Kuh, the TROLL Project director, for allowing us access to the system during early phases of its implementation on IBM 360/67. The staff of the TROLL Project has been particularly helpful in assisting us with data analysis and in supervising our work at various stages. We would like to thank Walt Maling, Jonathan Shane, Alexis Sarris, and Mark Eisner for their patience and perseverance in the face of continuous calls for assistance.

Finally, we would like to thank Mrs. Helen Grace for typing many drafts of this manuscript and for her infinite patience and good nature.

This book is in four parts. Parts I and the Epilog were the joint efforts of the authors. Robert North wrote the historical narrative in Part II, and Nazli Choucri the quantitative analysis in Part III. We both have revised the entire manuscript and, needless to say, share responsibility for the book as a whole.

October, 1974

Nazli Choucri
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Robert C. North
Stanford, California

Nations in Conflict

Contents

Maps

Tables

Introduction

Some of the more important causes of war are rooted in the processes of national growth: a substantially growing state is thus likely to generate expansion, competition, rivalry, conflict, and violence. Growth can be a lethal process. Despite proclamations of nonintervention or even genuinely peaceful intentions, a growing state tends to expand its activities and interests outward—colliding with the spheres of interest of other states—and find itself embroiled in international conflicts, crises, and wars that, at least initially, may not have been sought or even contemplated. The more a state grows, and thus the greater its capabilities, the more likely it is to follow such a tendency. These are serious charges to make, especially in view of the fact that most countries today seem committed to policies of accelerated growth. If war is to be avoided, however, protestations of peaceful intentions are not enough. This book presents the reasoning behind these assertions, together with supporting or qualifying evidence from the period, 1870–1914.

International conflict and war have been accounted for in many ways—in terms of aggressive "instincts," territoriality, population expansion, defense of trade routes, plunder, profit, and imperialism, among others. Some theorists have defined the causes of war in terms of the perceptions, expectations, anxieties, fears or psychopathological deviation of national leaders. Others have emphasized power struggles, arms races, competition for strategic advantage, and struggles for colonial dominance. Although we may admit that all of these factors are relevant, they do not amount to a theory of war—all factors need to be pulled together in some systematic way. The causes of war are highly interrelated; the problem is to find out which factors at any

given time in history have contributed most to international violence, how, and in what proportion. The task is to present a conceptual framework within which many more factors may be placed and others linked systematically.

The purpose of our study is to examine some of the factors and processes leading to wars between great powers. We have used World War I as a test case. We do not deal here with conflict in general, but only with those conflicts that themselves involve several great powers and yield very high casualties. Nor are we concerned with the specific events triggering war, but with the long-range processes leading to conflict and violence. Although colonial wars have a place in our theory, we are not directly concerned with them here. In other words, we do not deal directly with hostilities resulting from the attempt of a stronger country to establish or maintain control over a colonial territory, or, similarly, to establish or protect its interests in a vastly weaker country or region.

The evidence presented in this and two other books suggests to us that many ordinary social activities may combine to create the conditions for war, and that states and empires in pursuit of seemingly legitimate interests often lock themselves into escalating competition, rivalry, and antagonism—disentanglement from which may be exceedingly difficult short of war. We do not see in this conclusion a justification for armed conflict. We do conclude, however, that the probability of war will not be significantly lowered by good will alone, by deterrence strategy, by balance-of-terror diplomacy, or by minor adjustments in the international system, such as detente, partial limitation of armaments, or the removal of troops from "sensitive" areas.

We have used three main sources in our study: monographs and other standard historical studies; demographic, economic, political, and military data from statistical series; and data on interactions between countries from published chronologies. The hypotheses presented in Chapter 1 are derived from a broad review of history and a survey of the causes of war put forward by scholars of different disciplines and in a variety of sources.

Our idea of *historical process* derives from the observation that there are patterns, repetitions, and close analogies in the record of human affairs. We proceed from the assumption that most countries resort to war in certain broadly similar situations. Our study focuses on the historical process that helped destroy the European major-power system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That is, we have attempted to identify those elements and forces that precipitated WWI. To accomplish such a difficult undertaking we have identified long-range trends over a 45-year period (1870–1914) by applying econometric techniques over time and across countries to a variety of aggregate data and to interactions among major powers. Our investigation has uncovered an extensive interdependency among certain

variables: growth, expansion, competition, conflict of national interests, alliance, and violence. Moreover, we found that several combinations of these variables and different "paths of causalty" led to similar outcomes.

Computer simulations predicted broad social and political trends up to 1914, using coefficient estimates of the variables. The difference between these predictions and actual history was then measured (Chapter 17 reports the successes and failures of these simulations). Finally, we arbitrarily altered the coefficients of the variables—as if different values and goals had prevailed before 1914—to find out how different policies would have affected subsequent events. This exercise also provided a partial check on the theory being tested. Later in this book (Chapter 18) we shall summarize our findings and discuss their implications for policy analysis. We shall consider how projections can be made into the real future and how sensitivity analysis (the systematic alteration of coefficients for the variables) can be developed into an instrument for policy-makers.

In Part I we identify some important theoretical problems, present the conceptual background and theory, and offer a number of general propositions for testing, analysis, possible modification, or even rejection. In Parts II and III we seek to uncover—in different ways—how countries expanded their national interests, what happened when these interests collided with the interests of other states, to what degree nations compared their military and other capabilities with those of countries they viewed as rivals, and to what extent national leaders were influenced by differences between the resources and capabilities of their own country and those of other countries.

Part II draws from the writings of historians, the memoirs of national leaders, and archives. There we interpret the historical developments during this period in accordance with our conceptual framework. We show that the major elements of our theory of international violence have already been identified but not linked together systematically. We relate this theory to other, more conventional, explanations, and demonstrate some of the ways in which national attributes and actions relate to political decisions.

In Part III we analyze the complex processes that led to WWI, investigating the interdependency of national attributes, capabilities, and actions. Although specific findings in Part III may challenge some of our hypotheses, they will certainly shed light on the historical narrative in Part II. In Part IV we provide a critical assessment of our findings and identify some paradoxes associated with national growth and international violence.

A companion volume to this book, *International Crisis: The Outbreak of World War I*,[1] presents a day-by-day (even hour-by-hour)

[1]Nomikos and North, 1975.

narrative of events between the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the outbreak of war. Another companion volume, *Crisis, Escalation and War*,[2] quantitatively analyzes the perceptions and interaction of the great powers during the summer of 1914.

Yet our interests go beyond the summer of 1914, or even the forty-odd years before then—our concerns are more fundamental, more universal, probably more controversial. We believe that WWI was not an isolated conflict, but part of a continued struggle and competition among world powers. We also believe that although the details are different, the same dynamics of growth and competition operate today. It is our hope that the model presented here will be refined and tested for a great many other historical situations.

Among the causes of WWI, historians have cited "the Russian or the German mobilization; the Austrian ultimatum; the Sarajevo assassination; the aims and ambitions of the Kaiser, Poincaré, Izvolsky, Berchtold, and others; the desire of France to recover Alsace-Lorraine or of Austria to dominate the Balkans; the European system of alliance; the activities of the munition-makers, the international bankers or diplomats; the lack of an adequate political order; armament rivalries; colonial rivalries; commercial policies, the sentiment of nationality; the concept of sovereignty; the struggle for existence; the tendency of nations to expand; the unequal distribution of population, of resources, or of planes of living; the law of diminishing returns; the value of wars as an instrument of national solidarity or as an instrument of national policy; ethnocentricism or group egotism; the failure of the human spirit; and many others."[3]

Which is the "true" cause? Where does the truth lie?

The difference of opinion is due not so much to the use of different historical documents by one or another scholar, nor to the events chosen for emphasis, but to the quite different assumptions that investigators bring to the problem—to conflicting views of how people interact, how the behavior of one person affects that of another, how individuals affect their societies and vice versa, and to what extent human affairs are affected by conditions of the physical environment.

Historians, philosophers, and social scientists have used a variety of approaches in seeking to explain warfare. To date, however, none of these has proved wholly satisfactory. The difficulties include the severe problem of establishing final causes—especially in human affairs. Can we ever finally know why human beings act as they do? Is it possible to discover final causes in history? Many otherwise careful scholars will deny the possibility of a single cause, and then go on to

---

[2]Ole Holsti, 1971.

[3]Wright, 1965, pp. 727–728.

find evidence in support of what they call a "motive," and finally infer causality from the motive.

Some social scientists accept the premise that ". . . since war represents aggressive behavior on the part of nation-states, one can understand its causes by examining the determinants of behavior in individuals."[4] Although there is undoubtedly much evidence to recommend this assumption, those who hold to such a belief tend to overlook or at least oversimplify the fact that the behavior of nation-states is an outcome of the behavior of many individuals in different roles, pursuing different ends, representing different interests, bringing quite different amounts of influence to bear on final decisions, and "contributing in very different ways to the complex social processes" that lead to war.[5]

Other social scientists treat war as "a form of [national] deviation comparable to psychotic behavior in individuals."[6] Yet throughout much of history war has been viewed as perfectly normal and justifiable; societies that have not made frequent use of armed force have been considered "deviant."

The idea of a "mad leader" or "sick society" is closely related to the idea of "national psychotic deviation." George III, Jefferson Davis, Wilhelm II, Hitler, Tojo, and, more recently, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Ho Chi-minh have all been regarded by one observer or another as "mad." How, in a more or less democratic society, does a "mad" leader succeed in achieving power and attracting support for his "insane" schemes?

Many people have the naive belief that if the people of the world could only come to "know" and "understand" each other, through travel and cultural exchanges for example, they would no longer be predisposed to fight among themselves. This view overlooks the frequency (and often sanguine nature) of family feuds, revolutions, civil wars, and dynastic quarrels. There is ample evidence to support the conclusion that familiarity may invite warfare as well as contempt.[7]

Some observers believe that international trade "damps down" antagonisms; Anglo-German trade, however, had reached a peak just prior to the outbreak of WWI. Some writers, distinguishing between political systems and their "potential" for war, consider democracies peaceful and authoritarian states warlike. Yet both types of state become involved in wars. Marxist-Leninists hold that war will disappear with the eradication of capitalism and imperialism—yet the USSR and

---

[4]Kelman, 1965, p. 5.
[5]*Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
[6]*Ibid.*, p. 6.
[7]It is worth noting that in 1914 four monarchs—Nicholas II of Russia, Wilhelm II of Germany, George V of England, and Leopold II of Belgium—were kinsmen. Moreover, there had been "cultural exchange" among some of these nations for centuries.