CHAPTER 10

War and Peace

'War is the continuation of politics by other means.'

KARL VON CLAUSEWITZ, *On War* (1832)

PREVIEW

Military power has been the traditional currency of international politics. States and other actors have exercised influence over each other largely through the threat or use of force, making war a ubiquitous feature of human history, found in all ages, all cultures and all societies. However, even though war appears to be as old as humankind, there are questions about its nature. What distinguishes war from other forms of violence? What are the main causes of war and peace? And does the declining incidence of war in some parts of the world mean that war has become obsolete and military power is a redundant feature of global politics? Nevertheless, the nature of warfare has changed enormously over time, particularly through advances in the technology of fighting and military strategy. The longbow was replaced by the musket, which in turn was replaced by rifles and machine-guns, and so on. Major shifts were brought about in the twentieth century by the advent of 'total' war, as industrial technology was put to the service of fighting. The end of the Cold War is also believed to have ushered in quite different forms of warfare. So-called 'new' wars tend to be civil wars (typically involving small-scale, low-intensity combat), which blur the distinction between civilians and the military and are often asymmetrical. In the case of so-called 'postmodern' warfare, a heavy reliance is placed on 'high-tech' weaponry. How new are these new forms of warfare, and what are their implications? Finally, there are long-standing debates about whether, and in what circumstances, war can be justified. While some believe that matters of war and peace should be determined by hard-headed judgements about the national self-interest, others insist that war must conform to principles of justice, and others still reject war out of hand and in all circumstances. How can war be justified? Can and should moral principles be applied to war and its conduct?

KEY ISSUES

- What is war? What types of war are there?
- Why do wars occur?
- How, and to what extent, has the face of war changed in the post-Cold War era?
- Why has it become more difficult to determine the outcome of war?
- When, if ever, is it justifiable to resort to war?
- Can war be replaced by 'perpetual peace'?

NATURE OF WAR

Types of war

What is war? What distinguishes war from other forms of violence: murder, crime, gang attacks or genocide? First of all, war is a conflict between or among political groups. Traditionally, these groups have been states (see p. 114), with inter-state war, often over territory or resources – wars of plunder – being thought of as the archetypal form of war. However, inter-state war has become less common in recent years, seemingly being displaced by **civil wars** and the growing involvement of non-state actors such as guerrilla groups, resistance movements and terrorist organizations. Second, war is organized, in that it is carried out by armed forces or trained fighters who operate in accordance with some kind of strategy, as opposed to carrying out random and sporadic attacks. **Conventional warfare**, in fact, is a highly organized and disciplined affair, involving military personnel subject to uniforms, drills, saluting and ranks, and even acknowledging that war should be a rule-governed activity as set out by the 'laws of war' (as discussed in Chapter 14). Modern warfare has, nevertheless, become less organized in nature. It involves more irregular fighters who are loosely organized and may refuse to fight by the rules, developments that tend to blur the distinction between military and civilian life, as discussed later in the chapter.

Third, war is usually distinguished by its scale or magnitude. A series of small-scale attacks that involve only a handful of deaths is seldom referred to as a war. The United Nations defines a 'major conflict' as one in which at least 1,000 deaths occur annually. However, this is an arbitrary figure, which would, for example, exclude the Falklands War of 1982, which is almost universally regarded as a war. Finally, as they involve a series of battles or attacks, wars usually take place over a significant period of time. That said, some wars are very short, such as the Six Day War of 1967 between Israel and the neighbouring states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Other wars are nevertheless so protracted, and may involve sometimes substantial periods of peace, that there may be confusion about exactly when a war starts and ends. For example, the Hundred Years' War was in fact a series of wars between England and France, dated by convention 1337–1453, which form part of a longer conflict that began when England was linked to Normandy (1066). Similarly, although World War I and World War II are usually portrayed as separate conflicts, some historians prefer to view than as part of a single conflict interrupted by a twenty-year truce.

However, the nature of war and warfare has changed enormously over time, as they have been refashioned by developments in military technology and strategy. Wars, indeed, reflect the technological and economic levels of developments of their eras. From the days of smoothbore muskets, with soldiers fighting in lines and columns, war gradually became more flexible, first through the advent of rifles, barbed wire, the machine gun and indirect fire, and then through the development of tanks and extended movement, especially in the form of the ***Blitzkrieg*** as used by the Germans in WWII. Industrialization and the greater capacity of states to mobilize whole populations gave rise in the twentieth century to the phenomenon of **total war**, exemplified by the two world wars of the twentieth century. Other differences between wars are based on the scale of

● **Civil war**: An armed conflict between politically organized groups within a state, usually fought either for control of the state or to establish a new state.

● **Conventional warfare**: A form of warfare that is conducted by regular, uniformed and national military units and uses conventional (not nuclear) military weapons and battlefield tactics.

● ***Blitzkrieg***: (German) Literally, lightning war; penetration in depth by armoured columns, usually preceded by aerial bombardment to reduce enemy resistance.

● **Total war**: A war involving all aspects of society, including large-scale conscription, the gearing of the economy to military ends, and the aim of achieving unconditional surrender through the mass destruction of enemy targets, civilian and military.

CONCEPT

War

War is a condition of armed conflict between two or more parties (usually states). The emergence of the modern form of war as an organized and goal-directed activity stems from the development of the European state-system in the early modern period. War has a formal or quasi-legal character in that the declaration of a state of war need not necessarily be accompanied by an outbreak of hostilities. In the post-Cold War era it has been common to refer to 'new' wars. These have been characterized, variously, as being linked to intra-state ethnic conflict, the use of advanced military technology, and the involvement of non-state actors such as terrorist groups and guerrilla movements.

the conflict and the nature of the outcomes at stake. At one extreme there are **hegemonic wars**, sometimes called 'global', 'general', 'systemic' or 'world' wars, which usually involve a range of states, each mobilizing its full economic and social resources behind a struggle to defend or reshape the global balance of power. On the other hand, there are 'limited' or 'regional' wars that are fought in line with more limited objectives, such as the redrawing of boundaries or the expulsion of enemy occupiers, as in the 1991 Gulf War (expelling Iraq from Kuwait) and the 1999 US-led NATO bombing of Kosovo (expelling Serb forces). Finally, a range of conflicts are often considered to be examples of 'unconventional warfare', either because of the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons (as discussed in Chapter 11) or because they fall into the classification of 'new' wars (discussed later in the chapter), sometimes seen as **guerrilla wars**.

Why do wars occur?

Each war is unique in that it stems from a particular set of historical circumstances. Chapter 2, for instance, examines the origins of WWI, WWII and the Cold War. However, the fact that war appears to be a historical constant has inclined some theorists to argue that there are deeper or underlying explanations of war that apply to all ages and all societies (Suganami 1996). In line with what remains the standard work on the subject of war, Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (1959), these theories can be categorized in terms of three levels of analysis, depending on whether they focus on human nature, the internal characteristics of states, or structural or systemic pressures. The most common explanation for war is that it stems from instincts and appetites that are innate to the human individual. Thucydides (see p. 242) thus argued that war is caused by 'the lust for power arising from greed and ambition'. War is therefore endless because human desires and appetites are infinite, while the resources to satisfy them are always finite; the struggle and competition that this gives rise to will inevitably express itself in bloodshed and violence. Scientific support for human self-interestedness has usually been based on the evolutionary theories of the British biologist Charles Darwin (1809–82) and the idea of a struggle for survival, developed by social Darwinians such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) into the doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest'. Evolutionary psychologists, such as the Austrian zoologist Konrad Lorenz (1966), have argued that aggression is biologically programmed, particularly in men, as a result of territorial and sexual instincts that are found in all species. Whether war is fought to protect the homeland, acquire wealth and resources, achieve national glory, advance political or religious principles or establish racial or ethnic dominance, it provides a necessary and inevitable outlet for aggressive urges that are hard-wired in human nature.

Such assumptions underpin classical realist theories about power politics, which portray contention amongst states or other political groups as a manifestation, on a collective level, of individual selfishness and competitiveness. However, biological theories of war also have their drawbacks. They offer an unbalanced view of human nature that places too much emphasis on 'nature', which implies that human nature is fixed or given, and too little emphasis on 'nurture', the complex range of social, cultural, economic and political factors that shape human behaviour and may modify instinctual drives or channel them in particular directions. Furthermore, even if the idea of innate aggression is

● **Hegemonic war**: War that is fought to establish dominance of the entire world order by restructuring the global balance of power.

● **Guerrilla war**: (Spanish) Literally, 'little war'; an insurgency or 'people's' war, fought by irregular troops using tactics that are suited to the terrain and emphasize mobility and surprise rather than superior firepower.

Thucydides (ca. 460–406 BCE)

Greek historian with philosophical interests. Thucydides' great work *The History of the Peloponnesian War* recounts the struggle between Athens and Sparta for control of the Hellenic world, 431–404 BCE, which culminated in the destruction of Athens, the birthplace of democracy. He explained this conflict in terms of the dynamics of power politics and the relative power of the rival city-states. As such, he developed the first sustained realist explanation of international conflict and, arguably, propounded the earliest theory of international relations. His dark view of human nature influenced Hobbes (see p. 14). In the **Melian dialogue**, Thucydides showed how power politics is indifferent to moral argument, a lesson sometimes taken to be a universal truth.

accepted, it by no means proves that large-scale, organized warfare is inevitable.

The second range of theories suggest that war is best explained in terms of the inner characteristics of political actors. Liberals, for example, have long argued that states' constitutional and governmental arrangements incline some towards aggression while others favour peace. This is most clearly reflected in the idea that democratic states do not go to war against one another, as is implied by the 'democratic peace' thesis (see p. 66). By contrast, authoritarian and imperialist states are inclined towards **militarism** and war. This happens because such regimes rely heavily on the armed forces to maintain domestic order in the absence of representative processes and through the need to subdue subordinate national and ethnic groups, meaning that political and military elites often become fused. This typically leads to a glorification of the armed forces, a political culture shaped by an atavistic belief in heroism and self-sacrifice, and the recognition of war as not only a legitimate instrument of policy but also as an expression of national patriotism.

Social constructivists place particular stress on cultural and ideological factors that make war more likely, either by portraying the international environment as threatening and unstable, or by giving a state or political group a militaristic or expansionist self-image. The spread of social Darwinian thinking in late nineteenth-century Europe has thus been linked to the growing international tensions that led to WWI, while the Cold War was in part sustained by US fears about the expansionist character of international communism and Soviet fears about the dangers of capitalist encirclement. Similarly, doctrines of Aryan racial superiority and the idea of German world domination contributed to Nazi aggression in the lead-up to WWII, and *jihadist* theories about a fundamental clash between the Muslim world and the West have inspired Islamist insurgency and terrorist movements. Alternative 'internal' explanations for aggression include that war may be used to prop up an unpopular regime by diverting attention away from domestic failure (as in the Argentine attack on the Falkland Islands in 1992), or that it is a consequence of demographic pressures, notably a bulge in the numbers of fighting age males at a time of economic stagnation and social dislocation (a theory used by Huntington (1996) to explain the growing political assertiveness of the 'Islamic civilization').

● **Melian dialogue**: A dialogue between the Melians and the Athenians, quoted in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, in which the latter refused to accept the Melian wish to remain neutral in the conflict with Sparta, eventually besieging and massacring them.

● **Militarism**: A cultural or ideological phenomenon in which military priorities, ideas and values come to pervade the larger society.

A variety of structural or systemic theories of war have been advanced. The most influential of these has been the neorealist assertion that war is an inevitable consequence of an anarchic international system that forces states to rely on self-help. In its gloomiest form, as advanced by offensive realists, who believe that states, regardless of their constitutional or governmental structures, seek to maximize power and not merely security, this suggests that international relations are destined always to be characterized by a restless struggle for advantage, with military conflict being an unavoidable fact of life. This tendency is accentuated by the security dilemma (see p. 19) that arises from fear and uncertainty amongst states, which are inclined to interpret defensive actions by other states as potentially or actually offensive. For realists, the only way that war can be banished permanently from the international system is through the establishment of world government (see p. 457) and thus the abolition of anarchy (a development they nevertheless regard as highly improbable as well as dangerous).

Other structural theories of war place a heavier emphasis on economic factors. Marxists, for instance, view war as a consequence of the international dynamics of the capitalist system. Capitalist states will inevitably come into conflict with one another as each is forced to expand in the hope of maintaining profit levels by gaining control over new markets, raw materials or supplies of cheap labour. All wars are thus wars of plunder carried out in the interests of the capitalist class. In its liberal version, the economic impulse to war is often seen to stem from the practice of economic nationalism, through which states seek to become self-sufficient economic units. The pursuit of **autarky** inclines states towards protectionist policies and ultimately towards colonialism, deepening economic rivalry and making war more likely. However, economic theories of war have become less influential since 1945 as trade has been accepted as a more reliable road to prosperity than expansionism and conquest. Insofar as economic pressures have encouraged interdependence (see p. 8) and integration, they are now seen to weaken the impulse to war, not fuel it.

War as a continuation of politics

The most influential theory of war was developed by Clausewitz (see p. 245) in his master work, *On War* ([1831] 1976). In Clausewitz's view, all wars have the same 'objective' character: 'War is merely a continuation of politics (or policy) by other means'. War is therefore a means to an end, a way of forcing an opponent to submit to one's will. Such a stance emphasizes the continuity between war and peace. Both war and peace are characterized by the rational pursuit of self-interest, and therefore by conflict; the only difference between them is the means selected to achieve one's goals, and that is decided on an instrumental basis (Howard 1983). States thus go to war when they calculate that it is in their interest to do so. This implied use of a form of cost–benefit analysis is entirely in line with the realist view of war as a policy instrument. The Clausewitzian, or 'political', conception of war is often seen as a product of the Westphalian state-system, in which international affairs were shaped by relations between and amongst states (although, strictly speaking, any political actor, including non-state ones, could use war as a policy instrument). The image of war as the 'rational' pursuit of state interest was particularly attractive in the nineteenth century when wars were overwhelmingly fought between opposing states and roughly four-fifths of

● **Autarky**: Literally, self-rule; usually associated with economic self-sufficiency brought about by either colonial expansion or a withdrawal from international trade.

APPROACHES TO . . .

WAR AND PEACE

Realist view

For realists, war is an enduring feature of international relations and world affairs. The possibility of war stems from the inescapable dynamics of power politics: as states pursue the national interest (see p. 130) they will inevitably come into conflict with one another, and this conflict will sometimes (but not always) be played out in military terms. Realists explain violent power politics in two ways. First, classical realists emphasize state egoism, arguing that rivalry between and among political communities reflects inherent tendencies within human nature towards self-seeking, competition and aggression. Second, neorealists argue that, as the international system is anarchic, states are forced to rely on self-help in order to achieve survival and security, and this can only be ensured through the acquisition of military power. For offensive realists in particular, this leads to a strong likelihood of war (see Offensive or defensive realism? p. 234). All realists, however, agree that the principal factor distinguishing between war and peace is the balance of power (see p. 256). States will avoid war if they calculate that their chances of victory are slim. Decisions about war and peace are therefore made through a kind of cost–benefit analysis, in which rational self-interest may dictate either the use of war or its avoidance. States that wish to preserve peace must therefore prepare for war, hoping to deter potential aggressors and to prevent any other state or coalition of states from achieving a position of predominance.

Liberal view

Liberals believe that peace is a natural, but by no means an inevitable, condition for international relations. From the liberal perspective, war arises from three sets of circumstances, each of which is avoidable. First, echoing realist analysis, liberals accept that state egoism in a context of anarchy may lead to conflict and a possibility of war. However, liberals believe that an international anarchy can and should be replaced by an international rule of law, achieved through the construction of supranational bodies. Second, liberals argue that war is often linked to economic nationalism and autarky, the quest for economic self-sufficiency tending to bring states into violent conflict with one another. Peace can nevertheless be achieved through free trade and other forms of economic interdependence, especially as these may make war so economically costly that it becomes unthinkable. Third, the disposition of a state towards war or peace is crucially determined by its constitutional character. Authoritarian states tend to be militaristic and expansionist, accustomed to the use of force to achieve both domestic and foreign goals, while democratic states are more peaceful, at least in their relations with other democratic states (for a discussion of the 'democratic peace' thesis, see p. 66).

Critical views

Critical theorists in the Marxist tradition have tended to explain war primarily in economic terms. WWI, for instance, was an imperialist war fought in pursuit of colonial gains in Africa and elsewhere (Lenin 1970). The origins of war can thus be traced back to the capitalist economic system, war, in effect, being the pursuit of economic advantage by other means. Such an analysis implies that socialism is the best guarantee of peace, socialist movements often having a marked anti-war or even pacifist orientation, shaped by a commitment to internationalism (see p. 64). Critical theorists in the anarchist tradition, such as Chomsky (see p. 228), have shown a particular interest in the phenomenon of hegemonic war, believing that the world's most powerful states use war, directly or indirectly, to defend or expand their global economic and political interests. War is therefore closely associated with hegemony (see p. 221), while peace can be built only through a radical redistribution of global power. Feminists, for their part, have adopted a gender perspective on war and peace. Not only are wars fought essentially between males, but the realist image of international politics as conflict-ridden and prone to violence reflects 'masculinist' assumptions about self-interest, competition and the quest for domination. For difference feminists in particular, the origins of war stem either from the warlike nature of the male sex or from the institution of patriarchy (see p. 417). By contrast, feminists draw attention to what they see as the close association between women and peace, based either on the 'natural' peacefulness of women or on the fact that women's experience of the world encourages an emphasis on human connectedness and cooperation.

Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831)

Prussian general and military theorist. The son of a Lutheran Pastor, Clausewitz entered the Prussian military service at the age of 12, and achieved the rank of Major-General by the age of 38. Having studied the philosophy of Kant (see p. 16) and been involved in the reform of the Prussian army, Clausewitz set out his ideas on military strategy in *On War* ([1832] 1976). Widely interpreted as advancing the idea that war is essentially a political act, an instrument of policy, the book sets out a 'trinitarian' theory of warfare which involves (1) the masses, who are motivated by a sense of national animosity, (2) the army, which devises strategies to take account of the contingencies of war, and (3) political leaders, who establish the aims and objectives of military action. Clausewitz is usually regarded as the greatest writer on military theory and war.

all wars were won by the state that started them. Moreover, although the hostility of the people was needed to fight a war, wars were fought by armies and therefore affected formal combatants rather than the larger civilian population. This made the costs of warfare more limited and easier to calculate.

The Clausewitzian conception of war has nevertheless attracted growing criticism. Some of these criticisms are moral in character. Clausewitz has been condemned for presenting war as a normal and inevitable condition, one, furthermore, that can be justified by reference to narrow state interest rather than wider principles such as justice. This therefore suggests that if war serves legitimate political purposes its moral implications can be ignored, a position that is discussed in the final section of this chapter. On the other hand, had Clausewitz's suggestion that the recourse to war should be based on rational analysis and careful calculation been followed more consistently, many modern wars may not have taken place. Other criticisms of the Clausewitzian conception of war emphasize that it is outdated, relevant to the Napoleonic era but certainly not to modern wars and warfare. First, modern economic and political circumstances may dictate that war is a less effective, and perhaps even an obsolete, policy instrument. If modern states are rationally disinclined to resort to war, military power may have become irrelevant in world affairs (van Creveld 1991; Gray 1997) (see p. 246). Second, the advent of industrialized warfare, and particularly the phenomenon of total war, has made calculations about the likely costs and benefits of war much less reliable. If this is the case, war may have ceased to be an appropriate means of achieving political ends. Finally, most of the criticisms of Clausewitz highlight changes in the nature of war that make the Clausewitzian paradigm of war no longer applicable. To what extent are modern wars post-Clausewitzian wars?

CHANGING FACE OF WAR

From 'old' wars to 'new' wars?

One of the most widely debated features of the post-Cold War era is how it has affected war and warfare. Modern wars are often considered to be 'new', 'post-modern', 'post-Clausewitzian' or 'post-Westphalian' wars (Kaldor 2006). In the

Debating . . .

Has military power become redundant in global politics?

Military power has traditionally been viewed as the chief currency of international politics. However, some argue that in recent decades the threat and use of force have become increasingly obsolete as a means of determining global outcomes.

YES

Obsolescence of war. Military power is redundant because war, certainly in the form of large-scale, high-intensity conflict, is now obsolete in many parts of the world. The spread of democratic governance has lead to widening 'democratic zones of peace', democratic states being reluctant to go to war with one another. The emergence, since 1945, of a system of international law (see p. 332) centred around the UN has also changed moral attitudes towards the use of force, making wars of plunder non-legitimate. The advent of total war, and especially the development of nuclear weapons, means that the impact of war is so devastating that it has ceased to be a viable instrument of state policy. Finally, states increasingly have other, more pressing, claims on their resources, notably public services and welfare provision.

Trade not war. One of the key reasons for the obsolescence of war is globalization (see p. 9). Globalization has reduced the incidence of war in at least three ways. First, states no longer need to make economic gains by conquest because globalization offers a cheaper and easier route to national prosperity in the form of trade. Second, by significantly increasing levels of economic interdependence, globalization makes war almost unthinkable because of the high economic costs involved (trade partnerships destroyed, external investment lost, and so on). Third, trade and other forms of economic interaction build international understanding and so counter insular (and possibly aggressive) forms of nationalism.

Unwinnable wars. Changes in the nature of warfare have made it increasingly difficult to predict the outcome of war on the basis of the respective capabilities of the parties concerned. This is reflected in the difficulty that developed states have had in winning so-called asymmetrical wars, such as the Vietnam War and in the counter-insurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. If the USA as the world's only military superpower is unable to wage war with a guaranteed likelihood of success, alternative, non-military means of exerting influence over world affairs are likely to become increasingly attractive.

NO

War is endless. Realists dismiss the idea that war has, or could, come to an end, on the grounds that the international system continues to be biased in favour of conflict. Military power remains the only sure guarantee of a state's survival and security, and the irresolvable security dilemma (see p. 19) means that fear and uncertainty persist. Moreover, 'zones of peace' may contract due to the 'rolling back' of globalization and a shift towards economic nationalism and intensifying great-power rivalry (as occurred before WWI). Further, the USA's massive global military predominance, a major reason for the decline of inter-state wars, is destined to change as world order becomes increasingly multipolar and therefore unstable.

New security challenges. The decline of inter-state war does not mean that the world has become a safer place. Rather, new and, in some ways, more challenging, security threats have emerged. This particularly applies in the case of terrorism (see p. 284), as demonstrated by 9/11 and other attacks. Terrorism, indeed, shows how globalization has made the world more dangerous, as terrorists gain easier access to devastating weaponry, and can operate on a transnational or even global basis. Such threats underline the need for states to develop more sophisticated military strategies, both to ensure tighter domestic security and, possibly, to attack foreign terrorist camps and maybe states that harbour terrorists.

Humanitarian wars. Since the end of the Cold War, the purpose of war and the uses to which military power is put have changed in important ways. In particular, armed force has been used more frequently to achieve humanitarian ends, often linked to protecting citizens from civil strife or from the oppressive policies of their own governments, examples including Northern Iraq, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor. In such cases, humanitarian considerations go hand in hand with considerations of national self-interest. Without military intervention from outside, civil wars, ethnic conflict and humanitarian disasters often threaten regional stability and result in migration crises, and so have much wider ramifications.

conventional view, war is an armed conflict between opposing states, an image that sprang out of the acceptance of the Westphalian state-system. During this period, war appeared to conform to a Clausewitzian paradigm. War as an instrument of state policy meant that wars were fought by uniformed, organized bodies of men – national armies, navies and air forces. A body of norms or rules also developed to regulate armed conflict, including formal declarations of war and declarations of neutrality, peace treaties and the 'laws of war'. However, war appears to have changed. Starting with the tactics employed in the 1950s and 1960s by national liberation movements in places such as Algeria, Vietnam and Palestine, and then extending to conflicts in countries such as Somalia, Liberia, Sudan and the Congo, a new style of warfare has developed, possibly even redefining war itself (Gilbert 2003). Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, such 'new' wars occurred in Bosnia and in the Caucasus, particularly Chechnya, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, often seen as part of the larger 'war on terror' (see p. 223). In what sense are these wars 'new', and how clear is the distinction between 'new' wars and 'old' wars?

Although not all 'new' wars are the same, they tend to exhibit some, if not all, of the following features:

- They tend to be civil wars rather than inter-state wars.
- Issues of identity are usually prominent.
- Wars are asymmetrical, often fought between unequal parties.
- The civilian/military distinction has broken down.
- They are more barbaric than 'old' wars.

The decline of traditional inter-state war and the rise of civil war has been a marked feature of the post-Cold War era. About 95 per cent of armed conflicts since the mid-1990s have occurred within states, not between states. Recent exceptions to this trend have included the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) and the 2008 Russian war with Georgia (see p. 232). The decline of inter-state war, and even the obsolescence of war in some parts of the world (so-called 'zones of peace'), can be explained by a variety of factors. These include the spread of democracy, the advance of globalization, changing moral attitudes to war often linked to the role of the UN, and developments in weapons technology, especially nuclear weapons, that would massively increase the devastation wreaked by large-scale war. On the other hand, civil wars have become more common in the postcolonial world, where colonialism has often left a heritage of ethnic or tribal rivalry, economic underdevelopment and weak state power, hence the emergence of 'quasi states' or 'failed states' (see p. 121). Most of the weakest states in the world are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, classic examples being Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Congo. These states are weak in that they fail the most basic test of state power: they are unable to maintain domestic order and personal security, meaning that civil strife and even civil war become routine. As the borders of such states were invariably determined by former colonial rulers, they typically contained a range of ethnic, religious and tribal differences, meaning that this postcolonial world often appears to be a 'zone of turmoil'.

● **Identity war**: A war in which the quest for cultural regeneration, expressed though the demand that a people's collective identity is publicly and politically recognized, is a primary motivation for conflict.

Modern wars are often portrayed as **identity wars**. Whereas earlier wars were motivated by geopolitical or ideological goals, modern wars often arise from cultural discord expressed in terms of rival identities. Identity politics (see p.

186), in its various forms, has arisen from the pressures that have been generated by factors such as economic and cultural globalization, especially as they have impacted on postcolonial societies, and the declining effectiveness of solidarities based on social class and ideology. Not all forms of identity politics give rise to hatred, communal conflict and bloodshed, however. This is more likely when groups embrace exclusive models of identity that define 'us' in terms of a hostile and threatening 'them'. According to Sen (2006), identity politics is most likely to lead to violence when it is based on a 'solitaristic' form of identity, which defines human identity in terms of membership of a *single* social group. This encourages people to identify exclusively with their own monoculture, thereby failing to recognize the rights and integrity of people from other cultural groups, and is evident in the rise of militant ethnic, religious and nationalist movements. The wars that broke out in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s (and particularly the Bosnian War), conflicts between Muslims and Hindus in the Indian subcontinent, the *intifadas* in the occupied territories of Israel and the 'war on terror' in general and especially the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, can each thus be viewed as examples of identity wars. Because identity wars are ultimately based on how people see themselves, they are often fought with unusual passion and ferocity. They also tend to be long-standing and may appear to be intractable, rendering the traditional notion of victory redundant.

Whereas inter-state war usually took place between opponents at a relatively similar level of economic development, modern wars are frequently asymmetrical, in that they pit industrially advanced and militarily sophisticated states against enemies that appear to be 'third-rate'. This applied in the case of US, or US-led, wars in Vietnam, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the case of the Russian war against Chechnya. **Asymmetrical wars** are characterized by the adoption of military strategies and tactics designed to create a more level playing field between opponents with very different military and economic capabilities, meaning that asymmetrical wars do not have assured and inevitable outcomes. Guerrilla warfare, which places a premium on manoeuvre and surprise, through the use of small-scale raids, ambushes and attacks, has been effective in defeating much better resourced enemies with greater fire power. This is also often supplemented by the use of terrorist tactics, ranging from roadside bombs to suicide attacks. A particular effort is usually made to strengthen links with the civilian population, so that war becomes a form of popular resistance, or **insurgency**. Such tactics aim less to defeat the enemy in strict military terms (something that may be impossible), but rather to demoralize the enemy and break its political will, as in Vietnam, Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, not only do developed states have militaries that are often poorly adapted to the needs of small-scale, low-intensity counter-insurgency warfare, but their advanced weapons, especially nuclear weapons, are effectively unusable.

The civilian/military divide has been blurred in a variety of ways. Since the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), a clear distinction has been recognized between combatants and civilians, which was relatively easy to respect while warfare was largely confined to the battlefield and strictly military personnel. However, by their nature, modern wars have a greater impact on civilian populations. This has occurred partly because of the diffuse nature of modern warfare, which tends to involve a succession of small-scale engagements rather than set-piece,

● **Asymmetrical war**: War fought between opponents with clearly unequal levels of military, economic and technological power, in which warfare strategies tend to be adapted to the needs of the weak.

● **Insurgency**: An armed uprising, involving irregular soldiers, which aims to overthrow the established regime.

KEY EVENTS . . .

Conflicts in the former Yugoslavia

1919	State of Yugoslavia recognized by the Treaty of Versailles, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire.
1945	Yugoslavia becomes a communist state, including six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro) and two autonomous provinces within Serbia (Kosovo and Vojvodina).
1986–89	Rise of nationalism in Serbia (the largest and most influential republic), associated with the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic after 1987.
1990	Following the fall of communism across the rest of eastern Europe, each republic holds multiparty elections, strengthening support for independence in Slovenia and Croatia.
1991	The break-up of Yugoslavia starts with declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia (June), Macedonia (September) and Bosnia Herzegovina (January 1992). By April 1992, all that remains within Yugoslavia is Serbia and Montenegro.
1991	The secession of Slovenia precipitates the Ten Day War in which the Slovenians successfully resist the Serb-led Yugoslav army.
1991–95	The Croatian War of Independence occurs, a bitter civil war fought against the Croatian Serb minority, who are helped by the Yugoslav army.
1992–95	The Bosnian Civil War occurs, becoming the longest and most violent European war in the second half of the twentieth century. Caused by opposition by ethnic Serbs to Bosnia's secession from Yugoslavia, the war witnesses the massacre of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and a brutal programme of 'ethnic cleansing', whereby Muslims and Croats are expelled from areas under Serb control. Despite the 1995 Dayton Agreement to re-establish a united country, Bosnia remains effectively divided into two autonomous halves, one Muslim-Croat and the other Serb controlled.
1996–99	The Kosovo War occurs, in which the Kosovo Liberation Army takes up armed resistance against the Serbs, with accusations of massacres and 'ethnic cleansing' on both sides. In 1999, a US-led NATO campaign of aerial bombing forces Serb troops to withdraw from Kosovo, leading to the removal of the Milosevic government in Belgrade in 2000. Kosovo declares its independence from Serbia in 2008.

major battles, meaning that the conventional idea of a battlefield has to be discarded as redundant. War has developed into 'war amongst the people' (Smith 2006). The blurring has also occurred because civilian populations have increasingly been the target of military action (through the use of land mines, suicide bombs, vehicle bombs and terrorism generally), its objective being to create economic and social dislocation and to destroy the enemy's resolve and appetite for war. Modern warfare is therefore often accompanied by refugee crises in

KEY CONTEMPORARY THEORISTS OF WAR


MARY KALDOR

Mary Kaldor (born 1946)

UK academic and international relations theorist. In *New Wars and Old Wars* (2006), Kaldor linked new wars to the crisis in state authority that has occurred through the impact of privatization and globalization. Violent struggles to gain access to or control the state lead to massive violations of human rights, with violence usually being carried out in the name of identity and mainly being directed against civilians. Kaldor's other works include *Global Civil Society* (2003) and *Human Security* (2007).

Martin van Creveld (born 1946)


MARTIN VAN CREVELD

Israeli military historian and theorist of war. Van Creveld's *The Transformation of War* (1991) attempts to explain the apparent military impotence of the developed world due to the predominance, since 1945, of low-intensity conflicts and non-conventional warfare. In this context, Clausewitzian ideas about political war no longer apply, as war often becomes an end in itself, rather than an instrument of national power. Van Creveld's other key works include *Supplying War* (1977) and *The Art of War* (2000).


DAVID KILKULLEN

David Kilkullen (born 1967)

Australian former army officer and adviser on counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. He argues that as the contemporary conflict environment is often complex, diverse, diffuse and highly lethal, counter-insurgency must seek to control the overall environment, paying particular attention to its 'cultural ethnography'. Kilkullen's ideas have influenced the USA's altered approach to the 'war on terror'. His works include 'Countering Global Insurgency' (2005), *The Accidental Guerrilla* (2009) and *Counter Insurgency* (2010).

which thousands and sometimes millions of displaced people seek shelter and security, on a temporary and sometimes permanent basis (as discussed in Chapter 7). The civilian/military divide has also been blurred by the changing nature of armies and security forces. Guerrilla armies, for instance, consist of irregular soldiers or armed bands of volunteers, and insurgency often comes close to assuming the character of a popular uprising. The use of **mercenaries** continues to be an important feature of armed conflict in parts of Africa, as in the failed 2004 coup in Equatorial Guinea. Such trends are nevertheless also apparent in developed states and especially the USA. The Iraq War was the most 'privatized' in history, with, by mid-2007, more private military contractors operating in Iraq, working for companies such as Blackwater (now renamed Xe Services) and Halliburton, than regular soldiers. At times, Blackwater even assumed control over US marines, as when it was given lead responsibility for quelling the April 2004 uprising in Najav.

● **Mercenaries**: Hired soldiers in the service of a foreign power.

Finally, new wars have often been more barbaric and horrific than old ones, as the rules that have constrained conventional inter-state warfare have commonly been set aside. Practices such as kidnapping, torture, systematic rape and the indiscriminate killings that result from landmines, car bombs and suicide attacks have become routine features of modern warfare. This is sometimes explained in terms of the implications of identity politics, through which the enemy is defined in terms of their membership of a particular group, rather than in terms of their role or actions. An entire people, race or culture may therefore be defined as 'the enemy', meaning that they are seen as worthless or fundamentally evil and that military and civilian targets are equally legitimate. Exclusive religious, ethnic or nationalist movements are therefore often characterized by their **militancy**, often expressed in terrorism or violence. This also explains why inter-communal strife is often associated with programmes of '**ethnic cleansing**'.

However, it is by no means clear that 'new' wars are as new as they appear. In the first place, inter-communal strife has always existed, and may simply be a feature of the end of major empires, in this case the Soviet empire and its satellite states. The shift towards so-called 'new' wars may therefore not necessarily be part of an ongoing or developing trend, but may instead mark a transitionary phase in the development of the international system. Second, there is nothing new about the large-scale disruption of civilian life and mass civilian casualties. Civilian casualties of war have consistently outnumbered military ones since the advent of total war in the early twentieth century. Third, earlier wars have also been asymmetrical, examples including the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Boer War (1899–1902), with irregular troops sometimes using unconventional tactics. For example, Spanish and Portuguese irregulars, fighting alongside the British army, used guerrilla tactics during the Peninsular War (1808–14) against Napoleon. Finally, the image of 'old' wars as gentlemanly affairs, based on rules and respect for the enemy, is largely a myth. Massacres, rape and indiscriminate slaughter have been common in wars throughout the ages. After all, the Hague and Geneva Conventions, the cornerstones of international law related to war (discussed in Chapter 14), were established because they were thought to be necessary.

'Postmodern' warfare

War and warfare have always been affected by changes in the technology of fighting. Two historical examples of such radical changes were the use of the longbow at the Battle of Agincourt (1415), which enabled heavily outnumbered English men-at-arms and archers to defeat the French cavalry, and the emergence of ballistic missiles and long-range nuclear weapons in the post-1945 period. It is widely argued that advances in weapons technology and military strategy from the 1990s onwards, particularly undertaken by the USA, have had a similar significance, amounting to a **revolution in military affairs** (RMA). Modern war has therefore been replaced by 'postmodern' war, sometimes called 'virtual war', 'computer war' or 'cyberwar' (Der Derian 2001). Although the term means different things to different people, the key feature of postmodern war is usually taken to be a reliance on technology rather than mass conflict. Postmodern wars keep weapons development to a maximum and actual conflict between major powers to a minimum (Gray 1997). The nature of postmodern war was revealed

● **Militancy**: Heightened or extreme commitment; a level of zeal and passion typically associated with struggle or war.

● **Ethnic cleansing**: The forcible expulsion or extermination of 'alien' peoples; often used as a euphemism for genocide.

● **Revolution in military affairs**: The development in the USA in particular of new military strategies, based on 'high-tech' technology and 'smart' weapons, aimed at achieving swift and decisive outcomes.

Focus on . . .

The Iraq War as a 'new' war?

The Iraq War can be viewed as an 'old' war in a number of respects. First, the war was, in origin, an inter-state war between the US-led 'coalition of the willing' and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Second, the USA justified its invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (see p. 131) in the conventional terms of self-defence. Its purpose was 'regime change' in Iraq, based on the (subsequently disproved) assertion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the (questionable) assertion that the Saddam regime had links to and had sponsored terrorist groups including al-Qaeda, suggesting that Iraq was a threat to the USA. Third, critics of the war have often portrayed it more as a conventional imperialist war, fought primarily to strengthen US control over oil supplies in the Gulf region.

Nevertheless, the Iraq War exhibits many of the characteristics of a 'new' war. Once the initial phase of the war, which led, within three weeks, to the fall of Baghdad and the overthrow of Saddam's 24-year rule, was completed, the conflict gradually developed into a complex insurgency war. Becoming increasingly ferocious from 2004 onwards, the insurgency had two dimensions. One was a conflict between US troops and Sunni guerrilla fighters, many of whom were initially Saddam loyalists, and a growing number of Iraqi religious radicals and foreign al-Qaeda fighters. The other was between Iraq's Sunni and Shia communities and led to an escalating orgy of sectarian violence. Identity-related issues were therefore clearly entangled with more conventional political ones. The USA also, over time, adapted its strategies to the challenges of a 'new' war. From early 2007 onwards, US military tactics were geared around counter-insurgency goals, particularly through the so-called 'surge'. In addition to increasing the USA's military deployment in Iraq, this involved putting more US troops onto Iraqi streets in an attempt to improve relations with the domestic population, and cultivating an alliance between US forces and Sunni insurgents (based in part on payments made by the USA and later the Shia-dominated Iraqi government to the Sunni 'Sons of Iraq'), helping to marginalize religious radicals and al-Qaeda fighters.

by the 1991 Gulf War, which witnessed the first widespread used of a range of new technologies. These included computing and satellite technology to facilitate 'surgical' strikes, stealth technology that eludes radar detection, anti-missile missiles, widespread electronic surveillance and sophisticated networked communications across all parts of the armed forces. In many ways, the Tomahawk cruise missile, essentially a precision-guided flying bomb that has a range of hundreds of kilometres, has become the leading symbol of this new form of warfare. Postmodern war aims not only massively to increase the accuracy and scale of devastation that a military assault can inflict, so achieving objectives speedily and with assurance, but also, and crucially, to do this while suffering very few casualties. In that sense, it is a form of war that takes account of the unwillingness of democratic electorates to put up with large-scale casualties over a prolonged period of time, as demonstrated by Vietnam. This explains the importance accorded to aerial bombardment in postmodern war. The US-led NATO bombardment that expelled Serb forces from Kosovo in 1999 was thus an example of 'no casualty' warfare (albeit, of course, on one side only).

How effective has postmodern war proved to be? The examples of the Gulf War and Kosovo seem to suggest that it can be highly effective, at least in achieving limited goals (the expulsion of Iraqi and Serb forces, respectively).

GLOBAL ACTORS . . .

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Type: Intergovernmental military alliance • **Founded:** 1948 • **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium
Membership: 28 states

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1948, when Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands, France and Luxembourg signed the North Atlantic Treaty (sometimes called the Brussels Treaty). The following year, seven further countries – the USA, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Italy and Portugal – joined the alliance. By 2010, NATO membership stood at 28, most of its newer members being former communist states. The central aim of NATO is to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political or military means. Its key principle as a military alliance is that an attack against one or several members would be considered an attack against all (Article 5 of the NATO Charter). All NATO decisions are taken jointly on the basis of consensus.

Significance: NATO is the world's premier military alliance. The combined military spending of all NATO members constitutes about 70 per cent of the world's military spending, mainly thanks to the USA. NATO was in origin, and remained for almost 40 years, a child of the Cold War. Its primary purpose was to act as a deterrent against the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its Eastern bloc satellite states, whose collective military alliance was the Warsaw Pact (1955). As its first Secretary General, Lord Ismay, put it, its role was 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. As such, NATO cemented the post-1945 bond between the USA and Western Europe, and contributed, with its communist bloc equivalent the Warsaw Pact, formed in 1955, to the military stand-off that characterized the Cold War period.

However, with the ending of the Cold War in 1990, NATO effectively had to find a new role. It did so by establishing itself as a force for European and global peacemaking and crisis management. It performed a valuable role as the UN's peacekeeping force in Bosnia in 1996, and extended its authority by setting up a Partnership for Peace (PFP) which provides former Warsaw Pact and other states with an opportunity to associate with NATO on a bilateral basis. PFP membership is often seen as the first step towards full NATO membership. NATO's new role was evident in its peacekeeping and enforcement operations in the former Yugoslavia, 1993–96. In 1999, it carried out its first broad-scale military operation through the 11-week bombing campaign (Operation Allied Force) that expelled Serb forces from Kosovo. Although NATO has usually acted under UN mandates, most NATO countries opposed efforts to require the UN Security Council to approve NATO military strikes.

September 11 caused NATO to invoke, for the first time in its history, Article 5. This was to have significant ramifications for NATO, eventually giving it a potentially global role. In 2003, NATO took over command of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, marking the alliance's first mission outside the north Atlantic area. It also drew NATO more closely into the 'war on terror' and gave it responsibility for a complex counter-insurgency struggle. An additional shift in focus arose during the 2000s as a result of NATO's expansion into the former communist states and republics of eastern Europe, paralleling the eastward expansion of the European Union. However, whereas EU expansion was relatively uncontroversial, NATO expansion became a growing source of tension between NATO, and particularly the USA, and Russia, encouraging some to talk of the revival of NATO's traditional Cold War role. The issue of Ukrainian and Georgian accession to NATO has been particularly controversial, the prospect of the latter having been one of the factors that contributed to Russia's war with Georgia in 2008 (see p. 232). Tensions with Russia also surfaced over calls for a NATO missile defence system that would complement the USA's missile defence system, due to be sited in Poland and the Czech Republic, although these plans were abandoned in 2009.

Furthermore, the USA's huge lead in 'high-tech' weaponry has been vital in consolidating its global military predominance and thus its hegemonic role in the world, especially as this encourages other states to bandwagon rather than to balance (see To balance or to bandwagon? p. 236). On the other hand, as in the past, advances in the technology of warfare and military strategy have not always or easily been translated into increased strategic effectiveness. One reason for this is that air power can seldom win wars on its own. As examples dating back to the 1940–41 **Blitz** in London, the 1945 Allied bombing of the German city of Dresden and modern examples, such Israel's air attacks on Hezbollah in July 2006 and Hamas in December 2008, demonstrate, aerial assaults rarely dispense altogether with the need for a land attack and therefore higher casualties, and, indeed, they may strengthen the resolve of the enemy. Even in the case of Kosovo, a planned three-day air onslaught went on for 78 days, and then only led to the withdrawal of Serb forces once Russia indicated that it would not support Serbia in the event of an all-out war. The other reason is that 'high-tech' warfare is of only limited value in the context of small-scale, low-intensity wars, especially when the enemy is highly mobile and difficult to distinguish from the civilian population. For example, the USA's 'shock and awe' assault on Baghdad in the early days of the Iraq War may have led to the speedy fall of Saddam Hussein and the collapse of the Ba'athist regime, but it did not prevent the development of a protracted and highly complex counter-insurgency war. Opponents such as the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah are largely immune to threats posed by postmodern war, showing that Tomahawks in the air may be no match for Kalashnikov sub-machineguns on the ground. This imbalance makes the enforcement of global order through military action a highly problematical affair (Howard 2002).

JUSTIFYING WAR

While the nature of war and warfare have changed enormously over time, debates about whether, and in what circumstances, war can be justified have a much more enduring character, dating back to Ancient Rome and including medieval European philosophers such as Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Thomas Aquinas. Three broad positions have been adopted on this issue. These are as follows:

- *Realpolitik* – suggesting that war, as a political act, needs no moral justification.
- Just war theory – suggesting that war can be justified only if it conforms to moral principles.
- Pacifism – suggesting that war, as an unnecessary evil, can never be justified.

● **Blitz**: An intensive and sustained aerial bombardment.

Realpolitik

● ***Realpolitik***: (German) Literally, realistic or practical politics; a form of politics or diplomacy that is guided by practical considerations, rather than by ideals, morals or principles.

The defining feature of political realism, sometimes referred to as ***realpolitik***, is that matters of war and peace are beyond morality, in that they are – and should be – determined by the pursuit of national self-interest. In this view, war is accepted as a universal norm of human history; although war may be punctuated by possibly long periods of peace, peace is always temporary. For practitioners of *realpolitik*, the bias in favour of fighting and armed conflict derives

Thomas Aquinas (1225–74)

Italian Dominican monk, theologian and philosopher. Born near Naples, the son of a noble family, Aquinas joined the Dominican order against his family's wishes. Aquinas' vast but unfinished *Summa Theologica*, begun in 1265, deals with the nature of God, morality and law – eternal, divine, natural and human. Influenced by Aristotle and Augustine, he identified three conditions for a war to be just: (1) war should be declared by a person with the authority to do so, (2) the war should have a just cause, and (3) the belligerents should have a right intention (that is, the desire for peace and the avoidance of evil). Aquinas was canonized in 1324, and in the nineteenth century Pope Leo III recognized Aquinas' writings as the basis of Catholic theology.

usually either from innate human aggression or the aggressiveness that arises from the mismatch between unlimited human appetites and the scarce resources available to satisfy them. Either way, this implies, at best, a belief in **negative peace**, defined by the absence of its opposite, namely war or (more generally) active violence (Dower 2003).

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to portray political realists as warmongers, who are unconcerned about the death and devastation that war can wreck. Carl Schmitt (1996), for example, argued against just wars, on the grounds that wars fought for political gain tend to be limited by the fact that their protagonists operate within clear strategic objectives, whereas just wars, and especially humanitarian war, lead to total war because of their expansive goals and the moral fervour behind them. Indeed, one of the reasons why realists have criticized utopian liberal dreams about 'perpetual peace' is that they are based on fundamental misunderstandings about the nature of international politics that would, ironically, make war more likely, not less likely. For example, during the interwar period, UK and French policy-makers, deluded by the theories of liberal internationalism, failed to act to prevent the re-emergence of Germany as an expansionist power, thereby contributing to the outbreak of WWII. The essence of *realpolitik*, then, is that it is better to be 'hard-headed' than 'wrong-headed'. The sole reliable way of maintaining peace from this point of view is through the balance of power (see p. 256), and the recognition that only power can be a check on power. Moreover, it may also be misleading to portray *realpolitik* as amoral. Rather, it is an example of moral relativism, in that it is informed by a kind of ethical nationalism that places considerations of the national self-interest above all other moral considerations. In other words, its enemy is the notion of universal moral principles, not morality as such.

However, *realpolitik* has been subject to severe criticism. In the first place, it draws on assumptions about power politics, conflict, greed and violence that serve to legitimize war and the use of force by making them appear to be part of the 'natural order of things'. Feminist theorists, for their part, have argued that the emphasis on the national interest and military might reflect an essentially masculinist view of international politics, rooted, for example, in myths about 'man the warrior' (Elshtain 1987; Tickner 1992). Second, in view of the scope of devastation and suffering that war wreaks, the assertion that matters of war and

● **Negative peace**: Peace defined as a period when war is neither imminent nor actually being fought, although the forces that give rise to war remain in place.

CONCEPT

Balance of power

The term 'balance of power' has been used in a variety of ways. As a *policy*, it refers to a deliberate attempt to promote a power equilibrium, using diplomacy, or possibly war, to prevent any state achieving a predominant position. As a *system*, the balance of power refers to a condition in which no one state predominates over others, tending to create general equilibrium and curb the hegemonic ambitions of all states. Although such a balance of power may simply be fortuitous, neorealists argue that the international system tends naturally towards equilibrium because states are particularly fearful of a would-be hegemon (see Approaches to the balance of power, p. 268).

peace are beyond morality (universal or otherwise) reflects a remarkable stunting of ethical sensibilities. Most thinking about why and when war can be justified therefore focuses on how the resort to war and its conduct can be reconciled with morality, usually through the notion of a 'just war'.

Just war theory

The idea of a '**just war**' is based on the assumption that war can be justified and should be judged on the basis of ethical criteria. As such, it stands between realism or *realpolitik*, which interprets war primarily in terms of the pursuit of power or self-interest, and **pacifism**, which denies that there ever can be a moral justification for war and violence. However, just war theory is more a field of philosophical or ethical reflection, rather than a settled doctrine. Its origins can be traced back to the Roman thinker, Cicero, but it was first developed systematically by philosophers such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546) and Hugo Grotius (see p. 334). Modern contributors to the tradition include Michael Walzer (see p. 258), Jean Bethke Elshtain (see p. 428) and David Rodin (2002).

Can standards of justice be applied to war, and what are the implications of doing so? Those who subscribe to the just war tradition base their thinking on two assumptions. First, human nature is composed of an unchangeable mixture of good and evil components. People may strive to be good, but they are always capable of immoral acts, and these acts include killing other human beings. War, in other words, is inevitable. Second, the suffering that war leads to can be ameliorated by subjecting warfare to moral constraints. As politicians, the armed forces and civilian populations become sensitized to the principles of a just war and the laws of war, fewer wars will occur and the harm done by warfare will be reduced. Just war theorists therefore argue that the purpose of war must be to re-establish peace and justice. But has a war ever fulfilled these high ideals? WWII is often identified as the classic example of a just war. The Nazis' record of growing aggression in the 1930s leaves little doubt about Hitler's determination to pursue bold and far-reaching expansionist goals, and possibly even world domination. The murder of 6 million Jewish people and others during the war itself demonstrates clearly the brutality and terror that Nazi domination would have entailed. Humanitarian intervention (see p. 319) has also been widely justified in terms of just war theory, as discussed in Chapter 14.

Just war theory addresses two separate but related issues. The first of these deals with the right to go to war in the first place, or what in Latin is called ***jus ad bellum***. The second deals with the right conduct of warfare, or what in Latin is called ***jus in bello***. Although these branches of just war thinking complement one another, they may have quite different implications. For example, a state fighting for a just cause may use unjust methods. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether, for a war to be just, it must fulfil all the conditions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, or just a substantial number. There is also debate amongst just war theorists about the priority that should be accorded the various conditions. For instance, some have argued that greatest emphasis should be placed on ensuring that war is waged for a just cause, while others have suggested that it is more important that war is always a last resort. In the same vein, some just war theorists have argued that the conditions for *jus ad bellum* have greater moral

- **Just war**: A war that in its purpose and conduct meets certain ethical standards, and so is (allegedly) morally justified.
- **Pacifism**: A commitment to peace and a rejection of war or violence in any circumstances ('pacific' derives from the Latin and means 'peace-making').
- ***Jus ad bellum***: A just recourse to war, reflected in principles that restrict the legitimate use of force.
- **Jus in bello**: The just conduct of war, reflected in principles that stipulate how wars should be fought.

Focus on . . .
Principles of a just war

Principles of *jus ad bellum* (just recourse to war)

- *Last resort.* All non-violent options must have been exhausted before force can be justified. This is sometimes seen as the principle of necessity.
- *Just cause.* The purpose of war is to redress a wrong that has been suffered. This is usually associated with self-defence in response to military attack, viewed as the classic justification for war.
- *Legitimate authority.* This is usually interpreted to imply the lawfully constituted government of a sovereign state, rather than a private individual or group.
- *Right intention.* War must be prosecuted on the basis of aims that are morally acceptable (which may or may not be the same as the just cause), rather than revenge or the desire to inflict harm.
- *Reasonable prospect of success.* War should not be fought in a hopeless cause, in which life is expended for no purpose or benefit.
- *Proportionality.* War should result in more good than evil, in that any response to an attack should be measured and proportionate (sometimes seen as 'macro-proportionality' to distinguish it from the *jus in bello* principle). For example, a wholesale invasion is not a justifiable response to a border incursion.

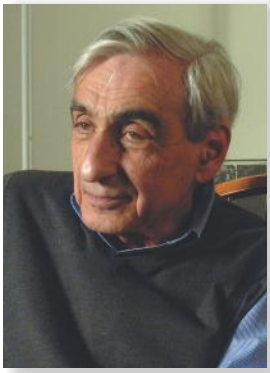
Principles of *jus in bello* (just conduct in war)

- *Discrimination.* Force must be directed at military targets only, on the grounds that civilians or non-combatants are innocent. Death or injury to civilians is therefore only acceptable if they are the accidental and unavoidable victims of deliberate attacks on legitimate targets, sometimes seen as **collateral damage**.
- *Proportionality.* Overlapping with *jus ad bellum*, this holds that the force used must not be greater than that needed to achieve an acceptable military outcome, and must not be greater than the provoking cause.
- *Humanity.* Force must not be directed ever against enemy personnel if they are captured, wounded or under control (prisoners of war). Together with the other *jus in bello* principles, this has been formalized over time, in the so-called 'laws of war'.

purchase that the principles of *jus in bello*, on the grounds that the ends justify the means. Finally, although the requirements of a just war may appear to be straightforward, they often raise difficult political, moral and philosophical problems when they are applied in practice.

For example, the principle that war should only be fought as a last resort fails to take account of the possibility that, by delaying the use of force, an enemy may become stronger, thereby leading to substantially greater bloodshed when confrontation eventually occurs. This, arguably, happened in the case of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The 'just cause' principle is complicated by debate about whether it implies only retaliation against a wrong that has already been committed, or whether it can be extended to include the *anticipated* need for self-defence, as in the case of a pre-emptive attack (see p. 225). Difficulties, similarly, arise over the principle of legitimate authority, in that some argue that only governments that are constitutionally and democratically constituted can be regarded as legitimate. The requirement that there should be a reasonable prospect of success has been criticized on the grounds that it may sometimes be

● **Collateral damage**: Unintended or incidental injury or damage caused during a military operation (usually used as a euphemism).



Michael Walzer (born 1935)

A Jewish US political philosopher, Walzer has made major contributions to thinking about the ethics of war. In *Just and Unjust Wars* ([1977] 2006), he developed a just war theory based on the 'legalist paradigm', which draws parallels between the rights and responsibilities of the individual and those of political communities (understood as states). This implies that states may defend themselves against aggression, possibly through pre-emptive attack (just wars), but that aggression in pursuit of self-interest is ruled out (unjust wars). Walzer also acknowledged that a 'supreme emergency' (stemming from an imminent and overriding threat to a nation) may require that 'the rules are set aside', and defended humanitarian intervention. Walzer's other key texts include *Spheres of Justice* (1983) and *Arguing about War* (2004).

necessary to stand up to bullying and intimidation, whatever the cost (as in Finland's resistance to Russian aggression in 1940). The application of this principle has, anyway , become more difficult due to the advent of 'new' wars, in which calculations of success based on the relative power of the parties concerned are notoriously unreliable.

Nevertheless, a range of deeper criticisms have been levelled at just war theory. In the first place, however desirable they may be, the elements that make up a just war may set states standards with which it is impossible to comply. It is questionable whether there has ever been a war in which one side at least has followed fully the rules of a just war. Even in a 'good war' such as WWII, the British used saturation bombing tactics against German cities such as Dresden, which were of no military importance, in order to terrorize the civilian population. The war against Japan was ended by the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing, overwhelmingly, civilians. Indeed, the idea of a just war has, arguably, been made irrelevant by modern methods of conducting war, which make it impossible to avoid harming civilians. Second, attempts to apply just war principles may result in the 'wrong' outcome. This could happen as the requirements of *jus in bello* may contradict those of *jus ad bellum*, in the sense that a party with a just cause risks defeat because it is fighting with its hands tied behind its back. Surely, once a war has started, military tactics should be determined by practical considerations, aimed at ensuring a swift and certain victory, rather than moral considerations? This issue has become particularly topical in relation to the issue of combating terrorism, sometimes linked to the so-called problem of **dirty hands**. Walzer (2007), for example, drew attention to the 'ticking bomb scenario', in which a politician orders the torture of a terrorist suspect to extract information about the location of a bomb, thus saving the lives of hundreds of people. Third, just war thinking may be applicable only in circumstances in which the parties to a dispute share the same or similar cultural and moral beliefs. Only then can one party be deemed to be just, while the other is unjust. As many modern wars, such as those that have been fought under the banner of the 'war on terror' (see p. 223), are cross-cultural wars, if not civilizational struggles, this requirement is no longer achievable. Military rivals may thus both legitimately claim to have justice on their side, reflecting the incompatibility of their value systems and ethical beliefs.

● **Dirty hands, problem of** : The problem that it may (arguably) be necessary for politicians to transgress accepted moral codes for the sake of the political community, making it right to do wrong.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION . . .

The war in Afghanistan as a 'just war'

Events: In October 2001, the USA and its NATO allies attacked Afghanistan with the specific intention of overthrowing the Taliban regime on the grounds that it provided a base and support for al-Qaeda terrorists. With the support of Afghan warlords and tribal leaders, notably the Northern Alliance, the Taliban regime was toppled by December 2001 with the bulk of al-Qaeda terrorists being killed or forced to flee to the border regions of Pakistan. However, a protracted counter-insurgency war then ensued against remnants of the Taliban regime, other religious militants and forces opposed to the newly-established pro-western government in Kabul, whose strongholds were in Helmand province and neighbouring provinces in the south of Afghanistan.

Significance: In a number of respects, the Afghan War can be viewed as 'just war'. In the first place, the war can be justified on the basis of self-defence, as a way of protecting the USA in particular and the West in general from the threat of terrorism, as demonstrated by the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. Commentators such as Elshtain (2003) argued that the 'war on terror', of which the Afghan War was a crucial part, was just in that it was fought against the genocidal threat of 'apocalyptic terrorism', a form of warfare that posed a potential threat to all Americans and Jews and made no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. The 2001 attack on Afghanistan also had a clear, and clearly stated, goal: the removal of a Taliban regime whose links to al-Qaeda were clearly established and undisputed. Furthermore, the USA and its allies acted as a legitimate authority, in that they were backed by NATO and enjoyed wide international support, including from Russia and China. Finally, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks could not have been reliably neutralized by diplomacy or non-violent pressure. The UN, for example, lacked the capability, authority and will to respond to the threat posed to global security by Islamist terrorism.

However, critics have portrayed the war as unjust and unjustifiable. Their arguments have included the following. First, the purpose of the war and the intentions with which it has been fought, may be unjust to the extent that the USA was motivated by a desire to consolidate its global hegemony or by a wish to strengthen control of oil resources in the Middle East. In this respect, the attack on Afghanistan amounted to unwarranted aggression. Second, the USA and its allies could not be considered as legitimate authorities in that, unlike the 1991 Gulf War, the Afghan War had not been authorized by a specific UN resolution. Third, although the chances of success in toppling the Taliban regime were high, the likelihood of defeating Islamist terrorists through the Afghan War was much more questionable. This was because of the probability that an invasion would inflame and radicalize Muslim opinion and also because of the dubious benefits of technological superiority in fighting a counter-insurgency war against an enemy using guerrilla tactics. Fourth, the USA violated accepted conventions of warfare through its treatment of prisoners of war (who were despatched to Guantanamo Bay and subjected to forms of torture) and in launching strikes against al-Qaeda and Taliban bases that often resulted in civilian deaths. Fifth, Islamists would argue that justice was on the side of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, not the invading forces, as they were engaged in a *jihad* – in this case, literally a 'holy war' – to purify Islam and expel foreign influence from the Muslim world.

Pacifism

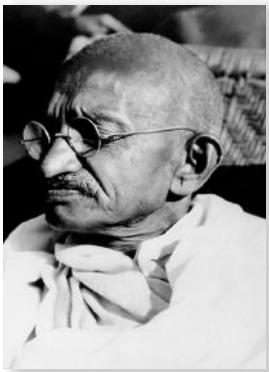
While just war theory attempts to reconcile war with morality by placing war within a framework of justice, pacifism views war and morality as irreconcilable. Pacifism, in short, is the belief that all war is morally wrong. Such a stance is based on two lines of thought, often combined as part of pacifist argument (Holmes 1990). The first is that war is wrong because killing is wrong. This principled rejection of war and killing in all circumstances is based on underpinning assumptions about the sanctity or oneness of life, often (but not always) rooted in religious conviction. Strains of pacifism have been found within Christianity, particularly associated with the Quakers and the Plymouth Brethren, within Hinduism and especially with Gandhi's ethic of non-violence, and also within Buddhism and Jainism. Strongly held pacifist convictions have thus provided the moral basis for **conscientious objection** to military service. The second line of argument, sometimes called 'contingent pacifism', places greatest stress on the wider and often longer-term benefits of non-violence for human well-being. From this perspective, violence is never a solution because it breeds more violence through developing a psychology of hatred, bitterness and revenge. This has been reflected in the use of pacifism or non-violence as a political tactic that derives its force from the fact that it is morally uncontaminated, as demonstrated by Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960s.

Pacifism has served as an important force in international politics in two main ways. First, in the form of so-called 'legal pacifism', it has provided support for the establishment of supranational bodies, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations (see p. 449), which aim to ensure the peaceful resolution of international disputes through upholding a system of international law (see p. 332). For this reason, pacifists have been amongst the keenest advocates of a world federation, or even world government. In that pacifists have often sought to transcend a world of sovereign states, they have embraced the notion of **positive peace**, linking peace to the advance of political and social justice. Second, pacifism has helped to fuel the emergence of a growing, if disparate, 'peace movement'. Peace activism first emerged as a response to the advent of the nuclear era, with the formation of groups such as European Nuclear Disarmament (END) and the UK-based Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) reflecting an awareness of the fact that the invention of nuclear weapons had fundamentally altered calculations about the human cost, and therefore the moral implications, of warfare. Support for such groups grew particularly strongly during the 1960s, especially after the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Pacifism has also helped to strengthen anti-war movements, with demonstrations against the Vietnam War establishing a model followed by later protests, for example over Iraq. Although anti-war protests are by no means entirely motivated by pacifist sentiments, they have established domestic constraints on the ability of governments to undertake or, perhaps more significantly, sustain military action.

Pacifism has nevertheless been criticized on a number of grounds. For instance, pacifists have been criticized for being cowards, for being 'free riders' who remain morally uncontaminated whilst at the same time benefiting from the security that the existence of a military and the willingness of others to fight affords them. They thus subscribe to the deluded belief that it is possible to have

● **Conscientious objection**: Objection to conscription into the armed forces on the grounds of conscience, usually based on the belief that it is morally wrong to act as an agent of war.

● **Positive peace**: Peace defined in terms of harmony and wholeness; the absence not just of war but of the *causes* of war.



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948)

Indian spiritual and political leader (called *Mahatma*, 'Great Soul'). A lawyer trained in the UK, Gandhi worked in South Africa, where he organized protests against discrimination. After returning to India in 1915, he became the leader of the nationalist movement, campaigning tirelessly for independence, finally achieved in 1947. Gandhi's ethic of non-violent resistance, *satyagraha*, reinforced by his ascetic lifestyle, gave the movement for Indian independence enormous moral authority. Derived from Hinduism, Gandhi's political philosophy was based on the assumption that the universe is regulated by the primacy of truth, or *satya*, and that humankind is 'ultimately one'. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a fanatical Hindu, becoming a victim of the ferocious Hindu–Muslim violence which followed independence.

'clean hands' in politics. However, pacifism has also been associated with deeper moral and philosophical difficulties. First, pacifism has been regarded as incoherent in that it is based on the right to life, but this can only be defended, in certain circumstances, through a willingness to use force to protect oneself or others (Narveson 1970). In this view, the right not to be attacked must include the right to defend oneself with, if necessary, killing force when attacked. The second difficulty concerns the implications of according overriding importance to the avoidance of killing, a position that treats other considerations, for example about matters such as liberty, justice, recognition and respect, as of secondary importance. However, the value of life is closely, and inevitably, linked to the conditions in which people live, which implies a necessary trade-off between the avoidance of killing and the protection of other values. It is precisely such a trade-off that has been used to justify humanitarian wars, in which the moral costs of forcible intervention are balanced against the alleviation of suffering and the protection of human rights as far as the domestic population is concerned. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 13.

SUMMARY

- War is a condition of armed conflict between two or more parties, traditionally states. However, the nature of war and warfare has changed enormously over time, as they have been refashioned by developments in military technology and strategy. There is nevertheless considerable debate about why wars occur, with explanations focusing on human nature, the internal characteristics of states, or structural or systemic pressures.
- The classic account of war, developed by Clausewitz, views it as a continuation of politics by other means. However, the Clausewitzian conception of war has been criticized for ignoring the moral implications of war, and on the grounds that it is outdated, either because war has become a less effective policy instrument or because modern wars are less easy to interpret in instrumental terms.
- Many argue that the nature of war has changed in the post-Cold War period. So-called 'new' wars tend to be civil wars rather than inter-state wars, often fought over issues of identity. They are also commonly asymmetrical wars, fought between unequal parties, tend to blur the civilian/military distinction, and, arguably, involve higher levels of indiscriminate violence.
- War and warfare have also been affected by the development of 'hi-tech' technology and 'smart' weapons, giving rise to so-called 'postmodern' warfare. Although such warfare was effective in the Gulf War and in Kosovo, its strategic effectiveness has been called into question, especially in the context of small-scale, low-intensity wars, when the enemy is highly mobile and difficult to distinguish from the civilian population.
- Three broad positions have been adopted on the issue of the relationship between war and morality. *Realpolitik* suggests that war, as a political act, needs no moral justification. Just war theory seeks to justify war but only if it conforms to moral principles about both the just recourse to war and the just conduct of war. Pacifism suggests that war, as an unnecessary evil, can never be justified.

Questions for discussion

- What is the difference between war and other forms of violence?
- Is there a meaningful difference between conventional and unconventional warfare?
- Is war inevitable, and if so, why?
- How persuasive is the idea that war is a political act?
- Why is it so difficult to win asymmetrical wars?
- Are 'new' wars really more barbaric and horrific than 'old' wars?
- How beneficial has 'hi-tech' warfare proved to be?
- Does realism reject the link between ethics and war?
- How valid are the traditional just war principles of *jus ad bellum*?
- Do the principles of *jus in bello* constitute an obstacle to the effective conduct of war?
- Why do pacifists reject war?

Further reading

Bellamy, A. *Just Wars: From Cicero to Iraq* (2006). A detailed and significant analysis of the moral basis of the just war theory, which explores key contributions to its development.

Brown, M. E. (ed.) *Theories of War and Peace* (1998). A wide-ranging and acute set of essays that examine the causes of war and the conditions for peace.

Howard, M. *The Invention of Peace and the Reinvention of War* (2002). A short but deeply insightful overview of the issues of war and peace from a historical perspective.

Kaldor, M. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (2006). A highly influential account of the phenomenon of 'new wars' which examines both their nature and the conditions in which they emerge.

Links to relevant web resources can be found on the *Global Politics* website