Have Wars and Violence Declined?

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Abstract

For over one 150 years liberal optimism has dominated theories of war and violence. It has been repeatedly argued that war and violence either are declining or will shortly decline. There have been exceptions, especially in Germany and more generally in the first half of the 20th century, but there has been a recent revival of such optimism, especially in the work of Azar Gat, John Mueller, Joshua Goldstein, and Steven Pinker who all perceive a long-term decline in war and violence through history, speeding up in the post-1945 period. Critiquing Pinker's statistics on war fatalities, I show that the overall pattern is not a decline in war, but substantial variation between periods and places. War has not declined and current trends are slightly in the opposite direction, with deadly civil wars largely replacing inter-state wars. There is more support for their view that homicide has declined in the long-term, at least in the North of the world (with the U.S. lagging somewhat). This is reinforced by technological improvements in long-distance weaponry and the two transformations have shifted war, especially in the North, from being "ferocious" to "callous" in character. This renders war less visible and less central to Northern culture, which has the deceptive appearance of being rather pacific. Viewed from the South the view has been bleaker both in the colonial period and today, partly due to interventions from outside. Globally war and violence are not declining, but they are being transformed.

Classical Views from the Enlightenment to the 1990s [1]

I will not here discuss in any systematic way the causes of war and violence. Rather I will describe their long-term trajectory, specifically their rise, decline, and transformation. Most social theorists during the last three centuries have argued that war was declining or was about to decline. I will later critique recent writers who have also argued this. In contrast I will detect no long-term or short-term decline of war, but rather a significant transformation of war whose consequences in the advanced countries has been to sever the traditionally close relationship between war and popular culture, making war less visible there and increasing the plausibility of writers who claim that war is declining.

Of course, social theories reflect to a large extent the apparent conditions of their time. Almost no-one before the late 18th century saw war as likely to decline because they elites could tolerate the limited wars of the period. were quite used . Then for the 18th century Enlightenment peace was more an expression of hope than a perception of reality. Kant believed that absolute monarchs made war while republics and constitutional monarchies mostly made peace. Provided the latter expanded at the expense of the former, peace might spread. This was the origin of a "republican" theory of peace based on the spread of representative government and the rule of law. Yet Kant added (perhaps tongue-in-cheek) that occasional wars were necessary so that the virtues of peace would not be forgotten. After the Napoleonic Wars, 19th century Europe itself was unusually peaceful. There were never-ending colonial wars fought in other continents, but most social theorists ignored them and advanced optimistic dichotomies distinguishing historical from modern societies. It was said that in prior history warfare and militarism had been at the core of social activity; now peace and capitalism would rule. The most common version of this was economic – free trade was bringing peace. War had brought profit but it was now superseded by the superior profits of trade. This had been argued by Montesquieu and Adam Smith and was now furthered by Bentham, Comte, Saint-Simon, Marx, and Spencer. But as Joas (2003: 128- 133) notes, writers advanced four reasons for optimism: republics, free trade, socialism, and industrial society, which according to one's perspective might all have pacifying effects. These arguments are still made today.

Some British liberals were conscious of their country's colonial wars and they embraced "liberal imperialism". Led by John Stuart Mill, they defended colonial wars. These brought the benefits of civilization to the benighted races (including the Irish, said Mill). War was necessary to bring peace. French writers endorsed this imperial civilizing vision. It is also a view current today in America, as it was in the U.S. at the end of the 19th century. It was the duty of the "Anglo-Saxon" race to bring civilization and peace to other races. The war against Spain and the seizure of its colonies reinforced this American view. Lester Ward (1903),

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[1] Good summaries of social thought on wars can be found in Joas & Knoebl, 2013, and Malesevic, 2010: 17-50.

borrowing from Spencer, argued that conflict and war had been responsible for human progress. Through violence hominids had gained dominance over animals, and through war the more technologically advanced races had triumphed, expanded, and spread civilization. Yet war would eventually decline as race differences were overcome by assimilation and miscegenation, culminating in a single global race (Go, 2013). Sumner (1898) also believed that war came from a "competition for life" between "in-groups" and "out-groups". But he was a pessimist: not only had it always existed, but it always would, "It is evident that men love war", he concluded dolefully during the war against Spain. War would not decline.

Much Germanic theory reflected the fact that Germans had not yet achieved empire but wanted one, while Austrians did have an empire but were fighting desperately to keep it. For both war would continue to be necessary. Given such an environment Gumplowicz (1899) argued that modernity would not bring peace. Conflicts between dominators and dominated were endemic, ensuring the ever-present possibility of war (Gumplowicz, 1899: 116-24; cf. Ratzenhofer, 1893, 1906). More important German intellectuals like Treitschke, Weber, Simmel, Sombart and Scheler also saw no end of wars. Treitschke approved of warfare. He attacked liberal theories of peace, which he associated with the hypocritical British. The "slaughter" of enemies was part of the "sublimity" of war, he declaimed (1916: 395-6). Weber was a brilliant scholar of war in history, but he was also a liberal imperialist. Although disliking militarism he saw imperialism and war as necessary to modernity and German development. At first he embraced World War I and argued that Poland should be placed under colonial-style protection. But his support for the war, which he declaimed in August 1914, was mainly moral.: "Whatever the outcome, this war is great and wonderful". "Responsibility before the bar of history" meant that Germany had to resist a division of the world between "Russian officials" and "the conventions of Anglo-Saxon "society"", with perhaps a dash of "Latin reason" thrown in. "We have to be a world power, and in order to have a say in the future of the world we had to risk the war". [2] Once Germany had achieved its rightful place in the sun, a higher level of civilization would be attained and wars would decline – as the British liberal imperialists had argued and as their American counterparts do today. However, this was a temporary "rally round the flag" after which Weber shifted to call for a diplomatic solution to the war.

Scheler saw war as inevitable. The "genius" of war represented the dynamic principle of history, while peace was the static principle. War exposes the banal rationality and materialism of modern culture. It gives people a higher plane of existence, conferring an existential, even ecstatic sense of security inside the national community. Like Weber, he saw war as a battle of cultures. Whereas France and especially England embodied pragmatic and empiricist philosophy, Germany embodied the "true" philosophy of metaphysical idealism. War awakens a nation to the need to preserve its own culture and is justified when it is defense

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[2] Weber, 1988 edition, pp 60-61. I am grateful to Stefan Bargheer for help in translating this passage.

against an attack on its culture. England was seeking to impose its mercantile and utilitarian philosophy on Europe (Luft, 2007). Like Weber, however, Scheler shifted somewhat as the horrors of war became revealed. Rallies around the flag do not usually last long. Simmel saw war and peace "so interwoven that in every peaceful situation the conditions for future conflict, and in every struggle the conditions for future peace, are developing. If we follow the stages of social development backward under these categories, we can find no stopping-place." Yet he also called for armed struggle against materialistic Anglo-American "Mammonism" (1903, 799). Sombart similarly saw World War I as a struggle ranging the German "hero" against the British "merchant". Merchants were morally inferior, greedy for profit, money, and physical comfort. Heroes were superior in historical significance, motivated by ideals of the great deed and of sacrifice for a noble calling. Since Entente rhetoric declaimed this as a war of liberty and democracy against authoritarian aggression, the war was seen as a struggle for civilization on both sides.

So the most prominent German intellectuals of this period did not believe war was declining, and some approved of it. Marxists differed for they increasingly saw a close relation between capitalism, imperialism and war and they hoped to overthrow capitalism and bring peace. Hilferding and then Lenin were the major exponents of this line. However, most German socialists were not brave enough to oppose the war. Most theorists from satiated imperial Britain and France deplored war and conceived of their war as purely defensive. World War I then reinforced national differences. Russians, Americans, British, and French hoped this had been the war to end all wars. The Soviets used military metaphors for their policies -- shock troops, work brigades and the like – but they followed the Marxist tradition in believing that a socialist society would bring peace. After the war most British and French writers preferred to think about other things. Hobhouse the first professor of Sociology in Britain had predicted that the future belonged to higher ethical standards and peace and so he was shattered by the Great War. His response was to turn away in his last years from sociology to philosophy. Americans more generally experienced revulsion against World War I which they saw as essentially European and of little relevance to American sociology, which preferred to also think of other things.

It was different in Germany and Italy which had experienced unfavorable wars producing diverse strands of theory. One militarist strand morphed into fascism which celebrated war, sometimes in mystical terms, but always seeing it as crucial to further human progress. Treitschke was very influential here. Socialists did deplore war and hoped to abolish it, but for the moment felt they needed to form their own paramilitaries. On the fringes of fascism Pareto argued that rights would always derive from force, while Mosca said that those who held the lance and the musket would always rule over those who handled the spade or the shuttle. In France Callois (1939, 2012) adapted Durkheim's sociology of religion into a romantic fable of war, which he said had replaced the religious and secular festival in dragging people out of their mundane lives, giving them a sense of the

sacred. War is here seen as a product of modernity and its inadequacies, and especially for yearnings for national identity and spirituality.

So a large majority of writers outside of Germany and Austria up until World War I had believed that war had either declined or was about to decline. These two countries were dominated by pessimists or glorifiers of war, Yet World War II resulted in the victory of a Marxian-liberal alliance providing optimistic views of a peaceful future and a shared moral revulsion against war. But it was better not to think about it. This was so in Britain, America, France and Germany alike. Functionalism and modernization theory dominated and they had no place for war in their evolutionary vision. Like 19th century liberals they saw war as obsolete. Marxists emphasized class "struggle", but the metaphor did not actually mean killing. However they developed a strong Marxian critique of American imperialism. There was also a novel Marxist turn toward endorsing revolutionary violence, exemplified by Mao and Fanon. The war had produced excellent micro-studies of units of American soldiers but their legacy was to reduce the sociology of war to studies of the military profession. With some exceptions – Stanislas Andreski in England, Raymond Aron in France, Hannah Arendt and C. Wright Mills in the United States -- the social sciences neglected war in the first four decades after World War II, and this seemed justified by a decline in inter-state wars. But in general the main rivals to the optimists became those who preferred to ignore war. Much has changed among 21st century intellectuals. Today almost no-one in the global North glorifies war. Nor does anyone embrace the essentialist views that human nature or human society inevitably generate war (or peace). But many of the themes expressed in earlier periods find echoes today.

The Return of Liberal Optimism

The 21st century has seen a revival of interest in war and the military in sociology (eg Joas, 2003; Malesevic, 2010; Joas & Knoeble, 2013; Centeno & Enriques, 2016). Yet these scholars' suitably nuanced views have been swamped by a revival of liberal optimism, particularly expressed by Mueller (2009), Gat (2006), and the best-selling books by Pinker (2011) and Goldstein (2011). These books have gone down especially well in Washington where the notion of a Pax Americana isx said to rule. Mueller sees the decline of war as long-term. World War II might seem to create a problem for him, but he shrugs this off by claiming that one man, Adolf Hitler, was responsible for it. He emphasizes cultural shifts occurring during the 20th century, leading to war being "rationally unthinkable" with ever more countries simply "dropping out" of the war system. Gat sees war in 19th century utilitarian terms, referring to Adam Smith: war has become inferior to trade in securing scarce resources. He also rightly points to attributes of Western society which strengthen the attractions of peace – mature democracy, the growth of metropolitan life, the sexual revolution and the rise of feminism, and nuclear deterrence. But all differ from 19th century scholars in identifying a very long-term decline of war. There are no longer dichotomous views of war.

In theoretical terms Pinker draws on modern studies of human nature, offering a view of "angels" and "demons" struggling within us, capable of steering us either to war or peace. He also draws heavily upon Norbert Elias, the author of *The Civilizing Process,* originally published in German in 1939. Elias argued that a civilizing process involving self-restraint and impulse management had intensified over past centuries in Europe. Europeans had inhibited their impulses, anticipated the consequences of their actions, and empathized more with others. A culture of honor, embodying the ideal of revenge, had given way to a culture of dignity, embodying control of one's emotions. Pinker seems not to know that Elias regarded this as a history which had ended. As a refugee from Nazi Germany, and then as a wartime British intelligence officer interviewing hardline Nazis, Elias (2012) thought a "decivilizing process" had begun and the Cold War reinforced his view since he saw a real possibility of nuclear war. He died in 1990, at the very end of the Cold War, too soon perhaps to regain optimism. But Elias cannot be made to support liberal optimism today.

Since their theories have been heard before, their main contribution has been to add a considerable amount of data to the debate. Gat gives a knowledgeable narrative of violence and warfare through the ages, as does Pinker who also offers data on homicide within human groups. Goldstein offers much data on recent civil wars and especially on UN peacemaking operations. Since Pinker presents the fullest historical statistical data on the frequency of wars and the number of casualties they inflict, I focus first on his data before turning to war in recent years. Note that at no point in history do we possess certain knowledge on wars or homicides. Everyone is guessing. Pinker always guesses optimistically. Sometimes his optimism seems well-founded, sometimes not. However, I acknowledge a large debt to him for he has generated a historical data-set invaluable to all who research war.

A Critique of Pinker's Statistics of War

1) Pinker begins with Keeley's (1996) archeological and anthropological study which claims that very early hunter-gatherer societies were especially warlike. This is important to his argument that war and violence have diminished throughout most eras of human experience. But this is controversial. Ferguson (1997, 2013a & b) has gone through Keeley's earliest cases one by one, arguing that they had been cherry-picked and in any case only a small minority really practiced warfare. Gat responds to such criticism by assembling data on two peoples, Australian aborigines and the peoples of the Pacific North-West of Canada and the U.S. He says they offer "laboratories" in which primitive peoples were observed while still uncontaminated by contact with Western imperialism. He shows that these simple hunter-gatherers were indeed violent, perhaps more so

than modern societies, in the sense that a higher proportion of men died as a result of violence. Fry (2007), the authors in Fry's (2013) edited book, and Ember and Ember (1997) agree that the aborigines and the fishing communities of the north-west were warlike but they see them as exceptional. Excluding them (plus mounted hunters) most simple hunter-gatherers did not practice warfare. Instead, simpler societies saw great variations in war and peace. These critics also argue that feuding between individuals or families was much commoner than warfare, so that homicide and juridical execution within bands was common among hunter-gatherers, but not warfare against other bands. It is difficult to be sure. In a band of 40 people, containing about twelve men of fighting age, four of them might have died a probably violent death. Is that a case of a feud or a war? If the latter, 33% of the "army" died – a rate of death higher than in modern armies. But the likeliest conclusion is that most early communities were violent but did not make war, although we cannot be sure (Malesevic, 2010: 90-92, is sure).

There is more consensus that war was commoner among more complex hunter-gatherer communities, but whether war increased with the emergence of early agriculture is disputed. Then there is near-consensus once again that the rise of fixed human settlements and the emergence of states both increased and juridical warfare (but Pinker argues the reverse). This is not a unilinear pattern and early human experience was very varied. Neither Pinker's nor indeed the opposite argument can be supported over this immense stretch of history and pre-history.

2) War-related deaths are the commonest measure of the level of warfare. In prehistoric societies and among modern hunter-gatherers, Pinker says, war deaths averaged 15% and amounted "up to" 60% of the total population, whereas in modern nation-states war deaths have been 5% or less. It is impossible to construct accurate averages but the 60%in prehistory comes from the most extreme cases while the modern extreme cases of imperial conquests caused the deaths of over 95% of the natives in North America and Australia, while in the 20th century the Nazis disposed of about 70% of Jews, the Ottoman Turks about 70% of Armenians, and the Hutus about 60% of Tutsis. Recent killing-rates have been higher than ever before.

3)Pinker exaggerates the worst early historical cases. He puts the total death toll of the An Lushanx civil war in 8th century China at 36 million. This is derived from comparing Chinese censuses before and after the war. Sinologists accept that

this was a devastating war, but note that it also brought considerable damage to the Tang census administration, leading to severe under-counting of the postwar population. They regard 13 million as a more reasonable total for deaths due to the war, which of course is bad enough (Durand, 1980, Fitzgerald, 1961). He also accepts as truth the boasts of the rulers of ancient empires, especially the Assyrians, that they had wiped out entire populations in their millions, and here he is repeating a traditional European trope. But these were boasts with a strategic purpose. Faced with a city refusing to surrender, the Assyrians might massacre the inhabitants after taking the city, but this was to encourage other cities to submit. Given such a terrible demonstration of Assyrian power they usually did so. The Assyrians wanted to rule over other peoples, not exterminate them.

4)This was also true of the Mongols. They are crucial for Pinker. He wants to show that they were far deadlier than any human group seen since, which is again a traditional European trope. He estimates that they killed 40 million persons in total. Indeed, estimates of between 30 and 60 million dominate web entries on the Mongols, though they are written by people who appear to have no actual sources -- a typical internet rumor. The Mongol scholar Weatherford (2004:118) has declared "such figures are preposterous". To build up his case, Pinker relies on two known examples of terrible massacres, committed in the cities of Merv and Baghdad which fiercely resisted the Mongols but were overcome. At Merv he says that the total killed after surrender was 1.3 million, but this is six times bigger than its probable population at that time. Pinker's estimate of Baghdad's fatalities is 800,000. Again, this is higher than its total population which was somewhere between 200,000 and 600,000. Even if we conjecture that refugees from the surrounding countryside flooded into the cities, swelling their populations, there would not be room in the two cities for such numbers. One scholar (Anonymous, 2011) comments that 80,000 (removing a zero) is a much likelier estimate of the casualties in Baghdad.

Pinker would reply that the higher figures for the two cities and other cases of atrocities were given by contemporary sources, and this is true. But the Mongols, like the Assyrians, were murderous toward cities which resisted or rebelled against them, like Merv and Baghdad. After conquering a resisting city their normal practice was to divide the population into several categories. Elites were almost always killed, but artisans and merchants they spared—as they generally spared farmers – for they wanted to rule a rich land, not a depopulated desert. Nor

were women and children killed – they were enslaved. Most or all of the rest of the male urban population were then killed, except when the Mongols wanted more infantry recruits (Schmidt, 2011). Adding together all these exceptions reduces fatalities by more than half. The Mongols made inflated boasts about their killings in order to terrify others into submission. In a letter to Louis XI of France, Khan Hulagu boasted he had killed over two million in Baghdad, an utterly incredible figure. The Mongols expanded through spreading terror, exaggerating the extent of their killing to induce submission. It worked: the cities usually did submit and so were not put to the sword or enslaved (Giessauf, 2011). Some cities and regions were devastated, most appear not to have suffered. Resistance or submission was the key (Morgan, 1990: 82, 137-8). Most scholars conclude that it is impossible to estimate the number of the Mongols' victims. Anonymous (2011) gives what seems to be the best-informed estimate, a total of somewhere around 11.5 million casualties, much less than Pinker's 40 million. That figure is bad enough and it is worse than the atrocities perpetrated by any other group of that period, but their killings were not out of proportion to other terrible historical cases, including those in the 20th century.

4)Pinker (p 235-6) gives a list of the 21 historical cases with the highest absolute and relative death tolls. Most were wars or civil wars, though war-induced famines and diseases also figure.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

His cases are drawn from all ages of human history, though in columns 1-3 we can see that seven of them occurred during the first half of the 20th century, including the two deadliest of all, World War II and the killings and famine deaths of the period of Mao's rule in China. My own amendments of the death-toll from An Lushan and the Mongols (discussed above) are given in brackets in the table. But even rejecting my amendments would still produce results which would seem to refute his assertion of the decline of war.

But Pinker has an answer to this. He prefers to use, not the absolute number of people killed, but the relative death-rate -- deaths as a proportion of the total world population at the time, with the mid-20th century being the benchmark (thus it can be seen that the absolute and relative death-rates for the 20th century cases are the same). Columns 4 and 5 present his results. We can see that this changes

the picture since most of the wars with the highest relative death-rates were in the distant past, when global population was much lower. The deadliest are now not World War II and Maoism but the An Lushan rebellion in 8th century China and the Mongol conquests in the 13th century. Indeed all of the top eight are now from earlier centuries. This is in line with his theory. It is difficult to know what to make of this switch from absolute to relative deaths, for both might seem significant, and they differ.

However, should we not also take into account the duration of each case? Relative to the global population at its time World War II inflicted fewer deaths than had the Mongol Conquests, the Atlantic slave trade, or the annihilation of the American Indians or the Australian aborigines. Yet World War II lasted only eight years (if we include the Japan/China war), whereas the Mongol conquests lasted 100 years, and the slaughter of the Atlantic slave trade and of the American Indians took much longer. Pinker notes that the slave trade lasted twelve centuries in the Middle East and five centuries in the West. True, there is something horrible about an atrocity that endured for centuries versus one that was far briefer but killed more people, but the latter is also horrific and it may be a better measure of how much a society is involved in lethality. So I have calculated average annual killing rates based on Pinker's relative figures. On this measure World War II goes back up to the top with a much higher annual relative rate of killing than any other case. The runner-up is An Lushan, but only if we accept Pinker's inflated estimate of fatalities. I prefer my estimate of 13, not 36 million, and this drops An Lushan back to eighth position. Similarly, the Mongols drop down to 16th on my corrected figures. World War I replaces it as the runner-up (even if we do not count the 50+million Spanish flu casualties diffused to the world by troop movements at the war's end). These revised figures cast doubt on any notion of the decline of war.

5)To the extent that there were reductions in relative death-rates in the 20th century, these were produced not by increasing pacifism but by (a) an explosion in global population; and (b) a large increase in the numbers of workers essential for the war effort, but who are not counted as combatants. They are removed from the battlefield and less likely to be killed. This does not suggest a decline in warfare but a transformation in the nature of war – as I will argue later.

6) Pinker is inconsistent. On the one hand he combines long-lived but sporadic bouts of killings into a single case, like the Mongol Conquests or the two slave trades, but on the other hand he separates no less than six distinct cases in only the first half of the 20th century: the two world wars, the Russian and Chinese civil wars, and the Stalinist and Maoist famines. Yet these all occurred within a fifty-year period, they were all connected, and each one led directly or indirectly to the next. These might make them a single case, not six – like the Thirty Years War of the 17th century, although the 20th century case was near-global, not merely European or Chinese, like earlier cases. So the first half of the 20th century would contain **easily** the bloodiest "event" in human history, in either absolute or relative terms, without even taking annual rates into consideration.

7) The notion that the period 1815 to 1914 was relatively peaceful is again traditional Western-centrism for it excludes most colonial wars. Pinker downplays them but so do almost all scholars who use data derived from the Correlates of War Project. Its criterion is 1,000 battlefield deaths as the minimum requirement for a war. Colonial campaigns usually consisted of many small battles and only a few recorded native casualties. Yet there were millions of native casualties whom the colonizers did not count. The rise of civilization in the West did not bring more peace. The period 1850 to 1950 also saw millions killed in famines by colonial policies in India, the Congo Free State wars, and the Taiping Rebellion, all three of which figure in Pinker's list of the worst death-toll conflicts in human history. Combining these would greatly exceed the death-toll of any previous hundred-year period. Pinker has instead extended the World War period forward to cover the years 1914-2013, for the second half of the 20th century has seen few inter-state wars. Yet the two world wars were the culmination of the prior period of inter-imperial rivalry, whereas the years 1945-1952 marked a watershed in the history of war.

8) That watershed has been a shift from inter-state to civil wars. Pinker says that annual war deaths have plummeted from 500,000 per annum in the late 1940s to only 30,000 in the early 2000s. He can only be referring to countable battlefield deaths. Since civil wars involve far fewer big battlefields, he is underestimating the massive number of deaths caused by many dispersed, localized and almost uncountable atrocities and the knock-on effects of famine, malnutrition, and disease which he has included in earlier historical cases like the slave trade. He cannot be counting the over 700,000 total dead in the Rwandan genocide, nor

those in numerous other civil war killing-fields from Cambodia to the Sudan to Syria. He has inherited the 19th century tendency to ignore wars in the global South, no longer colonial but now civil wars. Include them and not even this most recent period has been one of greater peace across the world. I elaborate further on this later.

9)Finally, even if we accepted that this was a 70-year period of peace, this is too short a space of time on which to base a long-term evolutionary process. In the past there have been other examples of seventy year periods which contained few wars. Then came wars.

We have seen no long-term decline of war, for it has varied greatly across the world and across time. It was known in the earliest human communities but grew as hunter-gatherer groups became more complex, and probably grew again with the emergence of states and empires. Thereafter war remained persistent but erratic. Medieval and early modern Europe was an unusually warlike region and its highly developed military talents allowed it to conquer much of the world and annihilate or exploit many of its peoples. Yet during the same period in Asia Chinese hegemony ensured very few wars. Neither the Enlightenment nor industrial capitalism brought peace, but then the Europeans finally precipitated world wars which destroyed their own military pretensions. Since they no longer fought, inter-state wars declined, and were then replaced by civil wars. I will examine them later.

Homicidal Violence

I have so far only discussed organized warfare. Yet Pinker, Gat, Mueller, and Goldstein also perceive that violence between individuals has declined over the centuries and here they are mostly correct. From different perspectives Giddens, Foucault, and Mann have argued along parallel lines: modern societies have become more caged, more disciplined, more orderly, with routinized infrastructural powers obviating the need for military repression to deter lethal violence among the population. Pinker produces statistics revealing substantial declines in homicide rates in Europe through the centuries. He begins with 14th century Oxford, the city of dreaming spires. The study he cites claimed a rate of 110 people murdered per 100,000 people per year, making medieval Oxford a hundred times more dangerous than it is today, with a rate of less than one per 100,000. However, this has been challenged since it under-estimates the city's population. The average rate in forty local studies in 13th and 14th century England was 24 per 100,000 (Eisner, 2003, 2014). In fact the number of murders solved in

Oxford today by th.e fictional television detectives, Inspectors Morse and Lewis and Constable Endeavor, equal the higher estimate in medieval Oxford. In these series, as in the 14th century, about half the murderers have been academics or students! Today academics may fantasize about murder, but we do not actually commit it. We bicker but we do not batter. As Eisner (2014) says, we destroy each other through words not swords.

Between 1200 and 1500 there was not much change in Europe but then rates declined steadily (Eisner, 2014, Thome, 2007). By 1950 there was only one homicide per 100,000 people, although the American rate was much higher. After a spike upward in the 1960s, which Pinker sees as a "decivilizing" phase (meaning that he is not an inevitablist) the decline in homicide rates and violent crime rates resumed. Eisner (2014) suggests that part of the historic decline in homicide rates is due to a decline in the proportion of young men in the population and he shows that after 1800 improvements in medical technology reduced the chances of dying from one's wounds, thus reducing the death rate.

Overall Pinker is clearly right about homicides in Europe and Japan but he is not correct for much of the rest of the world. Fifty cities in the world now have homicide rates of over 30 per 100,000, higher than in medieval English cities. Most are in Latin America, three are in South Africa, but four of them are US cities (led by Detroit and New Orleans). No European city comes anywhere near this level of violence. In Western Europe Amsterdam has the highest rate, 4.4 murders per 100.000 people while in Eastern Europe Tallinn has a rate of 7.3 per 100.000. Pinker believes that the civilizing process has not yet reached Latin America or South Africa, but that it eventually will. But it also seems to have bypassed the United States. Europe is substantially pacified but the U.S. remains an outlier. In the UK in 2013 police officers fired guns on three occasions, killing no-one. Very few policemen in the UK carry guns, but in Germany and France they do. In 2013 the German police killed 8 persons and the French 10 (du Roy & Simbille, 2014). US official data reveal that police officers shot and killed just over 400 persons, although most scholars guess that the actual number of victims is much higher – perhaps even 1,000. Pinker worries about American violence but notes that only in the American South and among African-Americans is civilization lagging. Northern white homicide rates are only (!) double those of modern European countries, not ten times as high. But he is on dangerous ground when he segregates black from white, while statistically we could reduce the rates of all the world's cities by excluding those groups committing most homicides.

Thome (2007) stresses the role of the state in the decline. Infrastructural power is the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society and logistically implement its decisions throughout the realm. Almost all pre-modern states lacked infrastructural power and so did not have institutionalized, routinized procedures for maintaining order. Nor could they disarm (or want to disarm) the population. The state had to rely on intermittent violent repression and many homicides were committed by both subjects and rulers. In contrast modern states

have considerable infrastructural power whose institutions routinely preserve order without much violence. Most have disarmed the population (the US may be an outlier because it has not). Thus, says Cooney (1997), disputes between persons can be settled without recourse to violence through third-party arbitration and the law-courts, especially among higher social classes. In contrast, the poor often feel oppressed by the state and do not trust its legal system. Cooney says this is why homicide has moved down the class structure. In the past it was committed by all classes. Now it is mostly the province of the lower classes. Since wars are declared by elites, his argument can also be applied to the decline of wars in the North of the world. It is often asserted that democracy reduces the murder rate, but the reduction is more a consequence of a high level of infrastructural power. Gat adds the argument that not democracy but the emergence of an industrial-technological society has been decisive since it makes violence less profitable than economic exchange, repeating a combination of 19th century utilitarianism and industrialism as pacifiers. Others might substitute capitalism for industrialism. After all, Gat points out, pre-industrial representative governments (like Greek city-states and Republican Rome) were violent and made war frequently. Probably the decline in homicides was a consequence of all these processes. So we have a puzzle: wars have not declined in the long-run but inter-personal violence has, at least in most countries of the North. The key to unlocking this puzzle is to be found in the transformation of warfare.

Wars Transformed

War is not ending but it is changing. There has been a striking shift, identified by Randall Collins (1974) from "ferocious" to "callous" cruelty embodying indifference toward the victim. There might be no evolutionary trend toward kindness, merely a shift from inter-personal ferocity to long-distance callous indifference. Plunging sharp weapons into flesh has been replaced by bombing at a distance. Historically swords and javelins inflicted direct bodily violence, one person trying to hack at the body of another. Ferocity is required for this and was valued as a social trait. Bowmen were partly an exception, inflicting death at a distance, but if their infantry and cavalry protectors were dispersed, they would probably be slaughtered. Sports like tournaments and jousting, archery, and quarter-staff combat were specifically geared to ready the medieval population for physical combat. The great warrior was he who was most ferocious and vicious. But the deadliest weapons are now wielded by people who never see the enemy they kill. This was early typified by artillery corps firing on dots in the landscape and it was epitomized by World War II bombers who never saw the enemy at all. Here are the mundane yet chilling words of William Sterling Parsons, the commander of the Enola Gay immediately after he had dropped the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima:

"Results clear cut successful in all respects. Visible effects greater than any test.

Conditions normal in airplane following delivery"
(Quoted by Malesevic, 2010: 83)

There is no hint of any violence in the tone of his log entry, only bureaucratic indifference to the impact of atomic bombs on the victims.

Postwar guided missiles further lengthened the distances between killers and victims, while today's drones can be fired from a continent away. The bulk of military training is now technical, and calmness and callousness, not ferocity, are the dominant martial virtues. There are special force and infantry exceptions to this but ferocity is largely removed from the culture of the Northern countries making war. Randall Collins (2008) has produced extensive data on violent encounters within countries of the North. He notes that those involved are not actually very skilled at body-to-body violence. They flail and slap and they lack the ability to go for the jugular. The abolition of conscription and the use of specialized mercenaries is growing. This removes war from the everyday experience of most young men in the North of the world. There is no need for much cultural resonance of violence or training for inter-personal violence. Indeed, today we regard physically vicious people as deviants. We still have sports like boxing and wrestling (as did medieval people) but these are no longer relevant to war. Again, it is fantasy violence.

Also relevant to the question of culture is the proportion of army size to total population, "the military participation ratio", MPR, pioneered by Stanislas Andreski (1954). Ratios in peacetime ratios are always lower than in wartime so large fluctuations are to expected across time and space. The earliest estimated ratios are for classical Greece and Rome (ancient Chinese texts give unbelievable figures). Most ratios in the Greek city-stats were in the range of a 3-5% MPR but when threatened by major war this could rise above 10%. Roman figures were higher. As in Sparta the Roman ratio sometimes rose during over 20% (Morris, 2005, Patterson 1993). In medieval and modern Europe ratios again fluctuated -- under 2% in the 12th century, growing because of wars in the 14th and the 17th centuries, rising to near 20% during the Thirty Years War and then dropping to only about 2% by 1789. The Napoleonic Wars inaugurated another cycle of surge and decline. The ratio reached 11% in the US civil war, and between 7% and 11% among the European Powers in World War I. Ratios were under 1% in the inter-war period but surged to 7-12% in World War II. It then fell through the abandonment of conscription in most countries to under 2% by 2000, and 1% by 2010. Yet a few states in dangerous areas, like the Middle East or East Asia, continue to mobilize 10% of the population.

It is difficult to discern long-term trends from this, yet in the advanced countries lower MPRs are likely to stay, the consequence of armed forces becoming much

more capital-intensive, requiring the services of fewer soldiers but much larger numbers of civilians to supply them. World War II figures suggest that the US, Britain, the USSR, and Germany all mobilized at least half of their national product for military spending (Harrison, 1988: Table 3). If we could construct an" economic mobilization ratio", it would probably be much higher than in most prior history. In pre-industrial periods we cannot measure total product, but armaments industries were smaller while most of the total product in a near-subsistence economy would have to be consumed by farmers who had to be fed in order to supply the armies. Now mass armies have become rare, conscription has been abolished, but a large military-industrial complex has appeared. The workers in that complex are highly unlikely to experience bodily violence, still less death. All that is required of them is a certain callous indifference to the likely victims of the weapons they are making.

Peace At Last? War Since 1945

Liberal optimism is understandable within contemporary Europe, although it is a little odd that three Americans (Mueller, Goldstein, and Pinker) and an Israeli (Gat) are so optimistic, given that their countries are almost the only countries still waging war. Elsewhere, civil wars dominate, especially among poorer countries. Their numbers began to increase in the 1930s and this continued into the 1990s. There was a slight decline in civil wars at the beginning of the new century, and this clearly influenced our liberal optimists, but this was followed by a recent further increase. Ferocious violence endures in these civil wars, with more body-to-body assault, from machete hacking in Rwanda to killing, torturing and raping of captives in many parts of the world. There is much less long-range killing in civil wars and virtually none by rebel groups, who usually lack airplanes, tanks, and big artillery. But both sides commit ferocious atrocities. Some see these as "New Wars" with novel a-symmetry between the military powers of states and rebels, privatization of military activity, loss by states of the monopoly of the means of violence, self-financing rebels by means of money and weapons acquired from drugs or precious metals or from sympathizers abroad or (unwittingly) from aid agencies. All these trends are said to be reinforced by economic globalization and all weaken state sovereignty, offering further opportunities for rebels to intensify the spiral of violence (Kaldor, 1999; Muenkler, 2005). Most of these characteristics are indeed found in contemporary civil wars, but they often appeared in earlier wars too, while the link to economic globalization is dubious (Wimmer, 2013, Malesevic, 2010). Nonetheless, the replacement of inter-state wars by civil wars has increased ferocious violence in poorer countries.

There are three main measures of the frequency of recent wars. First, all scholars

agree that the post- World War II period has seen a large global decline in the number of interstate wars as defined by at least 1,000 battlefield deaths, as in the Correlates of War data sets. As Goldstein notes, nothing since World War II has approached its death-toll. Decline continued up to 2012, the last date for which I have seen data. Only the U.S. has recently launched big interstate wars. World battle deaths have declined since 1952, though a few big wars have introduced fluctuations. If we remove the five biggest conflicts since 1946, the downward trend disappears (Lancina & Gleditsch. 2005). But big wars, whether inter-state or civil, have almost disappeared – though Syria/Iraq is currently proving a significant exception. So are we finally approaching Kant's ideal of perpetual peace? The 19th century optimists would say "I told you so" (ignoring what had happened in the meantime).

But two other measures suggest otherwise. One, devised by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), reduces the cut-off point for a war to only 25 battlefield deaths instead of 1,000, thus including many sporadic, "low intensity" conflicts across the world. Using this measure, Themner and Wallensteen (2013) find a growing number of armed conflicts from 1955 to 1994, almost entirely due to rising civil wars, followed by a decline in the late 1990s. A low point was reached in 2003, though this level was higher than almost every year from 1950 to 1975. Between 2003 and 2012 the number of inter-state conflicts remained unchanged while cases of one-sided violence (ethnic cleansings) declined, and non-state violence (civil wars) increased (Themna & Wallensteen, 2014). This is a mixed picture, but from 2013 there was an increase in all these three forms of war. The third measure, used by Harrison and Wolf (2012, 2014) includes cases of conflict like border skirmishes, sabre rattling and shows of force. These increased fairly steadily between 1970 and 2001 (when their data end), but should cases without deaths be considered wars, ask Gleditsch and Pickering (2014)? Harrison and Wolf reply that a small border skirmish, like between Uganda and Kenya, or Chinese sabre rattling over its claims to Taiwan and the Spratly Islands might lead onto more serious outcomes. This is what happened in the Ukraine. NATO forces were pushed forward to Russia's borders, provoking a Russian response in the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. But these could only be considered part of trend data if sabre-rattling in other eras had been counted – which has not been done. But maybe state elites are warier of war but bluster and bluff more -- a modern equivalent of the ritual wars of early tribal societies hurling abuse and brandishing spears and bows but cautious about actually fighting. That would not be quite perpetual peace, but it would make actual wars less likely.

Warfare is gone in the relations between Northern countries. Whatever the level of conflict between the U.S., Japan and E.U. countries, they will not go to war with each other. But is this permanent or is it a temporary response to two devastating wars to be forgotten in another fifty years? What if a rising China and

a declining US begin to square off against each other, drawing in much of East and South-East Asia? As Kant observed, we may need reminding of the joys of peace by making war occasionally.

This might appear to be a story of a polarized world, a civilized pacific North (with the US an outlier) and an uncivilized warlike South. Yet appearances are deceptive, for two reasons. First, the profit- motives of arms companies and governments in the North has led to a massive "arms transfer" to poorer countries. In 2014 their arms exports totaled $25 billion, the US providing almost half of that. Most countries whose military expenditure account for 5% or more of GNP are poor. Data from the Stockholm International Institute of Peace Research (SIPRI) from 2004 to 2013 shows that global military spending in inflation-proof dollars marginally decreased over the period because a substantial decline in domestic spending by the U.S. and Western Europe was almost cancelled out by increases in most other regions of the world, especially in the Middle East and Africa, and in China. Except for China, much of the spending was purchases from countries of the North. Moreover, if we exclude U.S. spending from the global calculation (and it fell erratically from 48% in 2008 to 38% in 2015), then global spending continues to increase, as Goldstein (2011: 19) acknowledges. Weapons are also useful for regimes seeking to repress domestic opposition, especially African ones. Yet most state elites in the South also regard a bigger military as a sign of status in the international system. They want to flex their muscles in public. Militarism is far from over in the South, but it is assisted by the North.

Second, the Northern Powers still fight, but through proxies. The concept of "civil war" needs some qualification, for many civil wars do not stay within national boundaries. Most recent ones have been internationalized, as in the continuing struggles in Eastern Congo (involving interventions by nine other African countries), Mali (France and Chad plus US logistical support), Somalia (the US and various African Union states), Colombia (the US), Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan (the US and most of NATO), Libya (seventeen NATO members and Gulf states), Syria (the US, much of NATO, Iraq, Jordan, Iran, and Hezbollah), the Yemen (originally the U.S., Britain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, now the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Hezbollah), the Eastern Ukraine (Russia, with the US more equivocal in its assistance). Foreign intervention is also common against armed religious groups, like Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram, and the Lord's Resistance Army, and they themselves operate across borders. Sheehan (2008) asks in the title of his book about Europe, *Where Have all the Soldiers Gone?* (2008). Abroad is the answer. The US is the leading meddler and peddler of arms abroad, and it exports military "advisors" to many countries. NATO gives some assistance as well, and they all act a long way from home. The distance makes plausible the notion that the Northern states are now pacific. Of course, some of them are. But the U.S., followed by France and the U.K, followed by the other

NATO members are not.

Their foreign entanglements are also a long way from the domestic culture of the North. Its citizens are now rarely conscripted and do not face death in the face. As Goldstein says, we may be living in the most peaceable time ever. Of course, it depends who "we" are. We in the privileged North live peaceful lives and stand on the side-lines, cheering on our team playing away from home but making almost no sacrifices ourselves. This is what Mann (1988: 183-187) has described as "spectator sport militarism". At first it is an emotional experience – as football is. We wait with baited breath in the early stages of war, and we cheer on our side in a rally around the flag. But this militarism is only skin-deep. Unlike previous centuries there is almost no glorification of war. If things do not go well for our team, we turn our backs on the war. Who wants to support a losing team? Not many Americans in the cases of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The public lost interest and the returning soldiers were not greeted as heroes. They may have been applauded if these ventures had been successful.

For the North the action is far away, with the exception of measures taken against terrorists at home, which are used to justify killing abroad. But ferocity has been exported to its proxies. As Pinker, Mueller, Goldstein, and Gat all observe, Westerners shudder at the thought of slavery, torture, dueling, rape, and extreme forms of cruel punishment inflicted on human bodies. They shudder at body-on-body ferocity – but not when it is exported or replaced by callous, long-range killing. We prefer not to go into an abattoir. We prefer not to see the mangling of human beings. We prefer not to see torture, though many turn a blind eye to it if our side does it. We do not have to see them. But we still eat meat, we still make war, America may still torture its enemies and its allies may still assist extreme rendition.

Westerners are horrified at the ferocious decapitation of civilians inflicted by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, but not at the callous killing of civilians there by their own air forces. There is a big difference, of course. IS deliberately target particular individuals and groups and is proud to show videos of decapitations. The US and its allies do not usually target individuals, except when they send drones after those persons they identify as terrorists. The U.S. does try to avoid targets where there might be civilians present. But the military knows that bombing depends on imperfect intelligence-gathering on the ground, that it cannot be always aimed at the right targets, and that it cannot always hit the designated target. Rockets and bombs dropped by planes and drones will inevitably kill civilians, mistaking them for terrorists or because they are in close proximity to terrorists. The US military denies that it kills any civilians since to admit it might alienate Americans. Yet the U.S. may kill more civilians than does the Islamic State. State terrorism may be deadlier than the terrorists.

Civil wars are often described as being "low intensity", but this is a misleading term. Scattered paramilitary bands can terrorize large populations and kill an enormous number of civilians, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly through starvation, famine or pestilence. In almost all cases the civilian casualties far outweigh those killed in battle. Goldstein disputes this, saying the civilian and military casualties have remained at about 50%-50% for a very long time. It is difficult to believe this, given the figures in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Here

Source: Perlo-Freeman et. al., 2015. Drawn from SIPRI Data

In the Eastern Congo between 1988 and 2007, two rival estimates are given by international organizations of 2.5-2.8 and 5.4 million killed in total. It will be higher now since the fighting continues. I have used the low figure of casualties given by Lacina & Gledititch (2005). They estimate that 94% of these casualties were civilians, an astonishingly high percentage, but actually lower than in the conflicts in the Sudan and Ethiopia, as the table shows. Military casualties in Mozambique and Somalia might have risen up to about 25%, but none of the countries listed reach anywhere near the 50%-50% level asserted by Goldstein. Being a civilian is dangerous across swathes of Africa as it is across swathes of the Middle East

We also have another indicator of the toll of war, in the form of data on refugees, collected by the UNHCR since 1990. By 1993 the number of refugees fleeing abroad was 18 million. Then came decline to the low-point of 9 million in 2005, but this was followed by several years of rises, culminating in the highest ever figure in 2015 of 19.5 million. The total number of displaced persons, including refugees fleeing within their own country, has been much higher. The highest recorded point, 59.5 million, was again in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). The numbers are probably still rising. There is no trend toward global peace here, as Goldstein suggests.

So over the whole post World War II period there have been fewer big wars involving many battlefield deaths while smaller wars, almost all in origin civil wars, have held up. They increased right up to the 1990s, then declined somewhat. Goldstein (2011: 15) suggests that the decline in inter-state wars has eight causes: the end of the Cold War; U.S. dominance; the benefits of a global economy; the spread of human rights norms; the spread of democracy; increased

participation of women in politics; the proliferation of NGOs; and the growing field of conflict resolution. Elsewhere he controversially suggests that United Nations peacekeeping operations have made the biggest contribution to the decline of war. Two of these nine putative causes, the global economy and democracy, are simply extensions of 19th century theory, but the rest are not. What is new here is the emphasis on new inter-national and transnational institutions. This would seem to offer more of a chance for peace. Unfortunately, however, the decline in civil wars did not continue, so their effect must have been less than Goldstein anticipated. Data for 2014 show an increase of 35% in war fatalities over 2013, which figure had increased over 2012 (Neill & Wardenaer, 2015). Middle Eastern conflicts look like intensifying in the medium term, but we must beware the sociology of the last five minutes – a very recent trend is projected into the future. Predicting the future from the recent past is dangerous, as Goldstein himself says. Moreover, the regional variations remain large -- there are both very safe and very unsafe regions. The Enlightenment has only woven its magic in parts of the world, while some states enjoying peace locally are exacerbating wars elsewhere.

The United States is the extreme case among Northern countries. U.S. military interventions are big but rarely successful. The arguments of those who support them (like Pinker or much of Washington) are reminiscent of 19th century British imperialists like John Stuart Mill: the U.S. will bring civilization in the form of capitalism and democracy to benighted peoples. In Iraq and Libya there was success in removing a dictator. But the consequences were disorder, civil war, and more terrorists. Most Americans are now somewhat leery of further interventions on the ground though in polls around 65% of them favor sending drones to bomb suspected terrorists. The defeat in Vietnam led to twenty years of American caution, but the collapse of the Soviet Union led to more adventurism. How long will the lessons of the recent failed interventions last? American politicians continue to believe that the United States has a global responsibility to bring order and democracy to the world, they still have a massive military, and many believe in using it. After another twenty years war temptations might arise again.

Americans and NATO are squeamish in relation to their own troops. The main point of long-range killing is to avoid one's own military casualties. Pinker points out that in the Iraq War of 2003 only 4,000 Americans were killed. Although the numbers of Iraqis killed is endlessly debated, it must have been over half a million (Hagopia et. al., 2013). Before then Koreans, Vietnamese, and Afghans had taken heavy hits. Pinker makes clear whose side he is on, declaring "the three deadliest postwar conflicts were fueled by Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese communist regimes that had a fanatical dedication to outlasting their opponents." (p 371). When discussing the Vietnam War he even says that U.S. forces were "ethical warriors" concerned with protecting civilians. He says that the U.S. has

spread civilization through its wars while he ignores the death-toll which has accompanied them. In fact the U.S. has practiced what Martin Shaw (2002) has called "risk-transfer militarism" – our soldiers are protected from harm, but not soldiers or civilians thought to be our enemies. Sub-contracting military tasks to private security forces intensifies this. The mercenaries take up more of the strain -- and the blame too if things do not go well. Increasing callousness at the expense of ferocity has a military downside too. It can lead to weakness in war, for our low-tech enemies believe they can outlast us, since we cannot endure casualties. From Vietnam to Iraq they have been proved right.

The worst future scenario would be a self-inflicted Armageddon, a "nuclear winter", or the unleashing of uncontrollable biological weapons which might make the planet uninhabitable by humans. Danger intensifies with nuclear proliferation. Several minor powers might acquire nuclear weapons, especially in the Middle East. Iranians currently see their nuclear program as a potent symbol of their country's status in the world, but an Iranian nuclear threat might trigger a deadly Israeli response or it might induce Saudi Arabia, Turkey and others to acquire such weapons. Chinese assertiveness might induce Japan and South Korea to similarly arm. Humanity would then be dependent on the rational caution of numerous political-military elites. The danger of a conflagration becomes greater the more the nuclear states. The nuclear age can tolerate balances of terror between two powers, as between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., and India and Pakistan. They stare each other in the face and can easily foresee the consequences of their actions. But if there are many nuclear powers the balance is more fragile, since states – especially those of different type -- cannot easily predict the actions of all the others. That is how World War I started .International terrorism presents a further threat. The capture and use of a lethal weapon-perhaps a biological or chemical weapon rather than a nuclear one - is possible by a group whose militants believe that heaven awaits the destroyer of polluted nations.

The future is unknowable. Are the current conflicts in the Middle East and Africa mere blips in a long-term civilizing process? Nuclear, chemical, and biological deterrence might continue to work, in which case peace will predominate over much of the world; or it will not work, in which case the body-count would be higher than ever – and civilization might end. Another disaster might come from climate change. If the nations do not negotiate a global decline in greenhouse gases, nature will be degraded and violent conflict for declining resources within and between countries might rise. Archeologists often attribute early wars to competition for declining natural resources. But a successful response to climate change would necessarily involve far more inter-national cooperation and this would reduce the chances of war. Goldstein is optimistic. He believes that international diplomacy spearheaded by the United Stations is gradually bringing

peace to the world. He also lists a number of sensible suggestions for further diplomatic efforts. I wish I shared his optimism. Our great grandchildren might experience almost perpetual peace or they might live, and perhaps die, in an extremely violent world. No-one can predict the sum of these possible outcomes.

Conclusion

I have stressed variations in warfare through the ages. The world has seen neither a long-term decline in war nor an overall increase. Europe has seen a long-term decline in homicide and a sudden decline in war. European homicide rates have been declining for centuries, wars only since 1945. A decline in homicide has also characterized other Northern countries. If the West or North were hermetically-sealed, optimistic liberalism would have much traction. The United States lags, with its warrior constitution and foreign policy – arguably more warlike than ever before. Decline in the North may be mainly due to the growing infrastructural powers of modern states, able to preserve more order by institutionalized means, a product less of democracy than of bureaucracy. The lessening of homicide and the development of capital intensive military technology have jointly lessened the culture of ferocity, the traditional core of militarism. Northern Powers contribute to faraway wars with more callous indifference than person-on-person ferocity. This tends to obscure the militarism which does continue, and seems to give liberal optimism more support than is in reality the case. In any case rhis is not so among many of the poorer countries of the world, many of them acting as proxies for the North and almost all of them receiving Northern arms. To claim that the North of the world is already a pacific civilization is hypocritical.

The first half of the 20th century was the deadliest period in human history. But can we see it as a mere blip in the civilizing process? Can the callous violence abroad by the United States and its allies be seen as a second blip? Will the rise of China lead to a new Cold War, with each side forming alliances, threatening each other, but fighting through proxies? Can the continuation of ferocious violence in civil wars in poorer countries be seen as merely a temporary hold-out against the civilizing process? And how long would "temporary" be? Gat is wrong to assert that in the post-Enlightenment era "war has become incomprehensible to the point of absurdity." (2006: 662). Much of the world knows it only too well. But our optimistic liberals would respond to my objections by asserting that a civilizing process is gradually spreading across the world. They might concede that it is slower and more uneven than they had suggested, but they would see the exceptions as mere blips in the long-run. But the history of violence I have presented suggests that periods and regions of war alternate with periods and regions of peace. This will probably continue for a good while yet. It is clear that we cannot explain war or peace by relying on universals like human nature or the

essential nature of societies, as historical pessimists did. But nor can we support the evolutionary theories of the past and present. Peace has to be metaphorically fought for. This is an admittedly uncertain ending, but wars have been the product of human choices which might have gone differently, and which might go differently in the future. I wish I could share the cheerful optimism of the 250 year-old liberal tradition, culminating in recent writers like Mueller, Pinker, Goldstein, and Gat. Yet what they say about history and the future represents more hope than experience. Unlike Kant, they seem not to recognize this; unlike Kant they do not think that humanity needs wars to fully appreciate peace.

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