

The origins of war and the preservation of peace

[Experience](#), [Peace](#)



Most people would think that wars are launched because a country needs more territory, or because a country's borders are threatened, or because of appeasement. The real reason for war is that countries begin to feel that their honor is threatened; they feel that other nations are not giving them the worth and dignity they deserve, and so they take to the battlefield. On the *Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, Dr. Kagan is a classical scholar who hopes to get politicians and statesmen to understand history so as not to repeat it.

He reminds that this was the intention of Thucydides of ancient Greece who wrote a history of the Peloponnesian Wars for "those who wish to have a clear understanding both of events in the past and of those in the future which will, in all human likelihood, happen again in the same or a similar way." His book starts with the Peloponnesian War of the fifth century B. C. - - the subject of a four-volume history Kagan finished in 1987--and ends with the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

He also analyzes the Second Punic War of 218 to 201 B. C. World War I, and World War II. War usually arrives over long distances and long stretches of time. For instance, in 226 B. C. Rome was by far the most powerful state in the Western world, but it concluded a treaty with Carthage which was expanding its influence in what is now Spain. The treaty sought to preserve the peace. Eight years later, after many twisting and turnings and concessions by Rome, it led to war. Rome limited the expansion of Carthage to the area south of the Ebro River, and it looked like an order delivered by Rome, not a concession.

Actually, Kagan writes, "... it was an attempt at appeasement in a moment of weakness and fear, the effect of which was to neither soothe nor deter but to inflame and encourage the Carthaginians. " The aftermath included events, which almost destroyed Rome's fortunes: Hannibal's arrival at the head of a powerful army in Italy itself and the beginning of the 18-year Second Punic War. Two wars, the First Opium War 1839-42 and the Second Opium War 1856- 60, waged by Britain against China to enforce the opening of Chinese ports to trade in opium.

Opium from British India paid for Britain' s imports from China, such as porcelain, silk, and, above all, tea. The First Opium War, between Britain and China, resulted in the cession of Hong Kong to Britain and the opening of five treaty ports. Other European states were also subsequently given concessions. The Second Opium War followed between Britain and France in alliance against China, when there was further Chinese resistance to the opium trade. China was forced to give the European states greater trading privileges, at the expense of its people. 1839-42 and 1856-60, two wars between China and Western countries.

The first was between Great Britain and China. Early in the 19th cent British merchants began smuggling opium into China in order to balance their purchases of tea for export to Britain. In 1839, China enforced its prohibitions on the importation of opium by destroying at Guangzhou (Canton) a large quantity of opium confiscated from British merchants. Great Britain, which had been looking to end China's restrictions on foreign trade, responded by sending gunboats to attack several Chinese coastal cities.

China, unable to withstand modern arms, was defeated and forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) and the British Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue (1843). These provided that the ports of Guangzhou, Jinmen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai should be open to British trade and residence; in addition Hong Kong was ceded to the British. Within a few years other Western powers signed similar treaties with China and received commercial and residential privileges, and the Western domination of China's treaty ports began.

In 1856 a second war broke out following an allegedly illegal Chinese search of a British-registered ship, the Arrow, in Guangzhou. British and French troops took Guangzhou and Tianjin and compelled the Chinese to accept the treaties of Tianjin (1858), to which France, Russia, and the United States were also party. China agreed to open 11 more ports, permit foreign legations in Beijing, sanction Christian missionary activity, and legalize the import of opium.

China's subsequent attempt to block the entry of diplomats into Beijing as well as Britain's determination to enforce the new treaty terms led to a renewal of the war in 1859. This time the British and French occupied Beijing and burned the imperial summer palace (Yuan ming yuan). The Beijing conventions of 1860, by which China was forced to reaffirm the terms of the Treaty of Tianjin and make additional concessions, concluded the hostilities. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is a dangerous and volatile situation that has attracted American attention for some decades.

The conflict is a sensitive subject that produces strong emotions in people. This conflict deals with Jewish nationalism, distribution of resources, and politics. About a hundred years ago, Jews underwent a drastic change in their view of themselves. At first a few, and then more, began to call themselves Zionists. Zionism is a term that in its broadest and early sense meant simply the "return" of Jews to their ancestral homeland. That homeland was called Zion (or Israel) and its heart was Jerusalem, known as the "City of Zion."

Early Zionists were simply pious, nonpolitical, religious Jews who thought they could best practice their faith in the Land of Zion. Some went primarily to pray, to study their religious books, and to await the arrival of the Messiah. Politics played an influential role in their thinking. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, Zionism came to have a political meaning: that Jews were not just a religious or ethnic group but were a nation of people who should have their own state. Today Zionism is the term for Jewish nationalism.

Not all Jews agree upon what Zionism is, but to a point there is agreement, it is upon three things: there should be a Jewish state; it should be permanent, independent, and secure; and Jews who are threatened anywhere in the world should be able to go there to be safe. All other issues-the boundaries of the state, the nature of government, relations with the Palestinians, relations with American Jews, religious law-are in dispute. It is important to understand the Palestinian views. Keep in mind two points. First, people respond to the circumstances in which they live.

If one is rich, one sees problems one way; if one is unemployed, one sees it a second way; if one owns a small shop, one sees it a third way. One must understand the circumstances in which Palestinians live if we are to understand their positions and actions. Second, there are about five million Palestinians. Like Americans, they disagree on political issues. They also change their minds as new circumstances develop. It is wrong to think Palestinians have a common view that remains unchanged. Their view changed considerably over the years.

They view that the Israelis are taking the land rightfully theirs, and are being "bullied" by Israelis. They are the ones who had their land taken away from them and are left with no where to live. In 1948, there were approximately 860,000 Palestinians inside today's Israel. About 700,000 were driven out or fled during the fighting that followed the declaration of Israeli statehood. The Palestinian population of Jerusalem went from 75,000 to 3,500; of Jaffa from 70,000 to 3,600; of Haifa from 71,000 to 2,900; of Lydda-Ramle from 35,000 to 2,000; of Tiberias from 5,300 to zero.

All refugees lost their property (about 800,000 acres were taken for Israeli use). The 160,000 Palestinians still in Israel in 1949 when the fighting stopped lost another 250,000 acres. The Palestinians in Israel were left without resources or strong leaders. When the Likud Party took power in 1977, it intensified colonization, pouring some \$1 billion into settlement building over the next seven years. Today, land taken from the Palestinians and earmarked for military purposes or Jewish settlements amounts to more

than 52% of the most fertile areas of the West Bank and 40% of the Gaza Strip.

Only a very small percentage of this land was sold willingly by Palestinians. Most of it was confiscated, and is held to be for Jews only-not-just Jews from Israel, but Jews from anywhere in the world. Many newly arrived immigrants from the United States and Russia are given heavily financed housing in the settlements built on seized Palestinian land. In 1990, according to Israeli estimates, will divert 83% of the water from the West Bank to Jewish settlements and Israel. The indigenous Palestinians will get only 17% of their own water.

This taking of natural resources from the Palestinians, are the reasons for the rise in conflict. To a large extent Jews and Palestinians are geographically concentrated. Most Jews live in Israel and most Palestinians live in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. There are exceptions of course. Many Jews live in the new ring of suburbs around East Jerusalem and in the new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. And many Arabs live inside of Israel, particularly in Galilee, including Nazareth, and in the Negev Desert in the South.

The first comprehensive peace talks between Israel and delegations representing the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states began in October 1991. After Likud lost the parliamentary election of June 1992, Labor party leader Yitzhak Rabin formed a new government. Rabin took a more conciliatory line toward the Palestinians and imposed strict limits on new Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. In 1993, after decades of

violent conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, leaders from each side agreed to the signing of an historic peace treaty.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin met in the United States on September 13 to witness the signing of the treaty, which paved the way for limited Palestinian self-rule in Israeli-occupied territories. The Gaza-Jericho Agreement was signed in Cairo on May 4, 1994, and applies to the Gaza Strip and to a defined area of about 65 square kilometers including Jericho and its environs. The Gaza-Jericho agreement addresses four main issues-security arrangements, civil affairs, legal matters, and economic relations.

The document includes agreement to a withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Gaza and Jericho, a transfer of authority from the Israeli Civil Administration to a Palestinian Authority, the structure and composition of the Palestinian Authority is a Palestinian police force, and relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. After intensive diplomatic efforts by the United States, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Yasser Arafat agreed on September 29, 1996 to go to Washington the following week to seek ways out of a war that has put the entire Israeli-Palestinian peace in jeopardy.

Despite the historical tensions of the Middle East, recent issues have arisen to intensify the conflict. Angry Palestinians protested Israel's decision to open an archeological site, the issue becoming one more in a growing number of Middle East tensions. The Muslim crowd feared the excavation of an ancient tunnel, right beside the foundations of Jerusalem's al Aqsa

Mosque compound, would undermine what is the third-holiest shrine in Islam after Mecca and Medina. The tunnel excavation dispute is only the latest indication of rising tension between Arabs and Israelis.

And the latest death count is 76 (as of October 1, 1996). In conclusion, this is an issue that deals with politics, uneven distribution of resources, and nationalism, and will take a great effort to come to an agreement. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a "battle" that has a long history that will continue till a mutual understanding and agreement is settled. Until the Israelis and the Palestinians can settle their differences and cooperate with each other, the "battle" will continue on. "No new taxes. This is a quote that most all of us remember from the 1992 presidential election. Along with it we remember that there were new taxes during that president's term in office. There are a myriad of promises made and things done in a presidential election year that have questionable motives as to whether they are done in the best interest of the people or in the interests of the presidential candidate. These hidden interests are one of the biggest problems with the political aspects of government in modern society.

One of the prime examples of this is the Vietnam War. Although South Vietnam asked for our help, which we had previously promised, the entire conflict was managed in order to meet personal political agendas and to remain politically correct in the world's eyes rather than to bring a quick and decisive end to the conflict. This can be seen in the selective bombing of Hanoi throughout the course of the Vietnam War. Politically this strategy

looked very good. However, militarily it was ludicrous. War is the one arena in which politicians have no place.

War is the military's sole purpose. Therefore, the U. S. Military should be allowed to conduct any war, conflict, or police action that it has been committed to without political interference or control because of the problems and hidden interests which are always present when dealing with polite United States involvement in the Vietnam War actually began in 1950 when the U. S. began to subsidize the French Army in South Vietnam. This involvement continued to escalate throughout the 1950's and into the early 1960's.

On August 4, 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred in which American Naval Vessels in South Vietnamese waters were fired upon by North Vietnam. On August 5, 1964 President Johnson requested a resolution expressing the determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in southeast Asia (Johnson). On August 7, 1964, in response to the presidential request, Congress authorized President Johnson to take all necessary measures to repel any attack and to prevent aggression against the U. S. in southeast Asia (United States).

The selective bombing of North Vietnam began immediately in response to this resolution. In March of the following year U. S. troops began to arrive. Although the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution specifically stated that we had no military, political, or territorial ambitions in southeast Asia, the interests back home were quite a different story (Johnson). The political involvement in

Vietnam was about much more than just promised aid to a weak country in order to prevent the spread of communism.

It was about money. After all, wars require equipment, guns, tools and machinery. Most of which was produced in the United States. It was about proving America's commitment to stop communism. Or rather to confine communism in its present boundaries. But most of all it was about politics. The presidential political involvement in Vietnam had little to do with Vietnam at all. It was about China for Eisenhower, about Russia for Kennedy, about Washington D. C. for Johnson, and about himself for Nixon (Post).

The last two of which were the major players in America's involvement in regards to U. S. Troops being used (Wittman). The military involvement in Vietnam is directly related to the political management of the military throughout the war. The military controlled by the politicians. The micro management of the military by the White House for political gain is the primary reason for both the length and cost, both monetary and human, of the Vietnam War (Pelland). One of the largest problems was the lack of a clear objective in the war and the support to accomplish it.

The predominant military opinion of the military's role in Vietnam in respect to the political involvement is seen in the following quote by General Colin Powell, " If you're going to put into something then you owe the armed forces, you owe the American People, you owe just you're own desire to succeed, a clear statement of what political objective you're trying to achieve and then you put the sufficient force to that objective so that you know when you've accomplished it.

The politicians dictated the war in Vietnam, it was a limited war, the military was never allowed to fight the war in the manner that they thought that they needed to, in order to win it (Baker). To conclude on the Vietnam War, the political management of the war made it unwinnable. The military was at the mercy of politicians who knew very little about what needed to be done militarily in order to win the war. There is an enormous difference between political judgment and military judgment. This difference is the primary reason for the outcome of the Vietnam War (Schwarzkopf).

The United States policy of Vietnamization was a good idea, but the time was not ripe for it to best be used. Nearly all experts in South Vietnam as incapable of handling a combined threat rated Saigon's military strength. True, Vietnamization was not what led to the total withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, but the opinions pressed by Laird had somewhat of an affect on our agreeing to sign a cease-fire agreement. Also, if we had used Vietnamization's program of building up South Vietnam's armed forces more extensively, South Vietnam might still be in existence today.

The Gulf War in the Middle East was almost the exact opposite in respect to the political influence on the war. In respect to the military objective of the war the two are relatively similar. The objective was to liberate a weaker country from their aggressor. The United Nation's resolution was explicit in its wording regarding military force in the Persian Gulf. The resolution specifically stated " by all means necessary. "(Schwarzkopf). The President was very aware of the problems with political management of warfare throughout the war.

He was very determined to let the military call the shots about how the war was conducted. He made a specific effort to prevent the suggestion that civilians were going to try to run the war (Baker). Painful lessons had been learned in the Vietnam War, which was still fresh on the minds of many of those involved in this war (Baker). The military was given full control to use force as they saw fit. Many of the top military leaders had also been involved in the Vietnam War. These men exhibited a very strong never again attitude throughout the planning stages of this war.

General Schwarzkopf made the following statement about the proposed bombing of Iraq in regards to the limited bombing in Vietnam, " I had no doubt we would bomb Iraq if I was going to be the Military Commander. " He went on to say that it would be absolutely stupid to go into a military campaign against his, Iraq's, forces who had a tremendous advantage on us on the ground, numbers wise. It would be ludicrous not to fight the war in the air as much, if not more, than on the ground (Schwarzkopf). The result of the Gulf War in which the military was given control, as we know, was a quick, decisive victory.

There were many other factors involved in this than just the military being given control, particularly in contrast to Vietnam, but the military having control played a major part in this victory. In conclusion, although there are some major differences between the two conflicts one fact can be seen very clearly. That is the fact that the military is best suited for conducting wars. Politicians are not. It is not the place of a politicians to be involved in the

decision making process in regards to war or military strategy. The White House has significant control in military matters.

That control should be used to help the military in achieving its goals, as it was in the Gulf War where George Bush said specifically to let the military do its job. The only alternative to this is to use political influence in the same way that it was used in Vietnam. If we do not learn from these lessons that are so obvious in the differences between these two conflicts then we are condemned to repeat the same mistakes. Lets just pray that it does not take the death of another 58, 000 of America's men to learn that the politician's place is not in war but in peace (Roush).