

On the causes for war: a further explanation

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The explanation for war that I [offered here yesterday](#) has, it seems, upset some people. That is because, I think, some suggested that it was simplistic. I disagree, but perhaps I need to elaborate on that.

It could be argued that the causes for war are diverse and include:

- * Territorial disputes
- * Ideological and political differences
- * Religious conflicts
- * Ethnic tensions
- * Failed diplomacy
- * Civil War

These are obviously additional to:

- * Resource disputes
- * Economic motivations.

The suggestion is that my thesis of war ignores this much longer list of causes and reduces everything to one explanation, which is that an expedient exploitation of a current economic advantage with the aim of securing a greater economic advantage is the explanation for almost all wars.

My argument is that all the other causes of war do not exist unless this expedient opportunity to exploit an economic advantage also exists. In other words, nobody undertakes a war for the reasons noted above unless they think they have a reasonable chance of successfully pursuing it, and that they would not think that unless it was both expedient to do so and they had what they believed to be a current economic

advantage over their opponent, giving them the prospect of success.

As a result, what I suggest is that all the other supposed causes for war are not only subservient to this single explanation that I have offered, but are actually used as excuses for war to disguise the real motive of those pursuing it.

I am not denying that historical, ethnic, religious, territorial and other disputes clearly exist, and are used to explain wars. That obviously happens. However, just as I think that fascists take any hint of a difference or grievance and exploit it to their narrative advantage with the intention of creating the perception of "otherness" on the part of those that they wish to victimise, so does the promoter of expedient economic warfare exploit narratives of the types noted to persuade people to participate in the war that they are actually undertaking with the intention of securing economic gain.

The techniques of the warmonger and the fascist are, in this sense, almost identical. Both are seeking support for a position of their own choosing through the promotion of populist causes that distract attention from their actual motivations for the action that they are undertaking which they could not pursue unless, first of all, they could generate that support - because they clearly need others to make sacrifice for them to secure their gain - and, secondly, if they did not think that they were already economically sufficiently advantage in comparison to their opponents to have a reasonable chance of securing victory.

I can, of course, be accused of being simplistic in my approach by trying to reduce my explanation for war breaking out at any particular moment to one single explanation, but it is my opinion that if the cause of war is explained in this way, then what we actually observe is that almost all war is opportunistic. It is begun by someone with sufficiently psychopathic tendency to believe that they have the right to sacrifice others for their own personal gain, and that they will only do this when they believe that their own well-being is unlikely to be prejudiced as a consequence. It is important to recall that those promoting wars have, at least in the modern era, had an exceptionally high survival rate despite creating armed conflicts.

To put this another way, it is entirely reasonable to look at all the other causes of war as methods a populist might use to secure popular support for a conflict, but I do not think they are the causes of conflict arising in themselves. As a result, I do not think that historical analysis of the cause of any war is that important. Precisely because all war is expedient at the moment, the necessary analysis to be undertaken is not why there might be reasons for dispute, because these are used as populist methods of securing support for that conflict, but why there might be a particular cause for the aggressor to decide to resort to conflict at the moment they begin it. Wars, in other words, happened in the present, and not in the past.

I would add one final observation, which is do not confuse the reasons for terrorist action with the causes of war. They are not the same thing.

I hope this clarifies my position.